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EX-JUDGE MAX B. MAY OF CINCINNATI DEAD

Served on Board of University of Cincinnati and Hebrew Union College. Oct. 4, 29

Special to The New York Times.

CINCINNATI, Oct. 3. — Former Judge Max B. May of this city died suddenly last night at his home in Avondale. His age was 63.

Judge May was born in Cincinnati on July 21, 1866. He fitted for college at Woodward High School. In 1888 he received the degree of Litt. B at the University of Cincinnati, and two years later an M. A. from Harvard University. He also studied at Harvard Law School. He was admitted to the bar in 1890.

He was a director of the University of Cincinnati from 1899 to 1903, and served on the board of governors of the Hebrew Union College from 1901 to 1907. In 1912 he was elected Judge of the Court of Common Pleas of Hamilton County, serving until 1919.

In 1916 he published a biography, "Isaac Mayer Wise, Founder of American Judaism," his maternal grandfather. In 1900 and 1901 he was the recipient of prizes for essays written in contests conducted by the Ohio Society, Sons of the Revolution.

Judge May was a member of the Ohio State and Cincinnati Bar Associations, the National Municipal League, Phi Beta Kappa Society and the City and University Clubs.

He is survived by a widow, the former Aimee Benswanger; a daughter, Mrs. David B. Joseph, and a grandchild. His first wife, the former Jean Cahn Wolf, died in 1914.

The board of directors of the University of Cincinnati appointed Sanford Brown and Alfred Mack to represent at ot Judge May's funeral tomorrow afternoon, and the Alumni Council named a delegation of six prominent men.

Dr. Herman Schneider, president of the university, said: "In the death of Judge May the University of Cincinnati has lost one of its stanchest supporters. First as a student, then as an alumnus and later as a member of the board of directors, he exerted a wide influence for the benefit of the university, and we all regret his death."

PRO

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to
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ISAAC M. WISE
AET. 60

From a photograph of a bas-relief by Boris Schatz. (Jerusalem.)





Isaac Mayer Wise

The Founder of American Judaism

A Biography

By

Max B. May, A. M.

Judge of the Court of Common Pleas
Hamilton County, Ohio.

Illustrated

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1916

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To

THE MEMORY OF MY BELOVED WIFE

JEAN MAY

THIS BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

PREFACE

In 1846, when Isaac Mayer Wise arrived in America, he found the Jews in this country with but little secular culture, many of them drifting away from Judaism, and what religious institutions they had, entirely unorganized. Their religious life was an intolerable imitation of that which existed in the old Ghettos of Europe—a condition so inconsistent with the spirit of American institutions as to make positively impossible its survival. Dr. Wise realized that if Judaism in America was to be preserved, it would be necessary not only to Americanize the Jew, but also his Judaism. This was his life work. But for this work the Jews in America would either have been lost to Judaism or their mode of life and worship an empty continuation of that brought with them from their narrow European environment. His death found American Judaism modernized and adapted to its new environment, and the American Jew preserving the essentials of his religion, living in every community as an influen-

tial, respected, public spirited, and philanthropic citizen.

How Dr. Wise founded an American Judaism, and a brief history of the institutions by means of which he accomplished this purpose, necessarily form an important part of this volume.

No complete history of Dr. Wise and his work has yet appeared. In 1900 the Alumnal Association of the Hebrew Union College published *Selected Writings of Isaac M. Wise, with a Biography by the editors, David Philipson and Louis Grossmann.* The biographical sketch consists of 112 pages. In 1900–1901, "The Reminiscences of Isaac M. Wise," published in his German Weekly, *Die Deborah*, July 3, 1874, to August 11, 1875, were translated by Rev. David Philipson, and published by Leo Wise & Co. Part of Dr. Philipson's biographical sketch treating of Dr. Wise's European life was based on conversations he had with Dr. Wise, and in the preparation of this biography I have relied upon this sketch, verifying it as far as possible. I have likewise quoted freely from Dr. Philipson's translation of *The Reminiscences.*

Rabbi Wise should have had his Boswell. Unfortunately, those closest to him never realized the importance of recording his many thoughtful

sayings. At his death, to the great disappointment of the historian and the biographer, no diary and other memoranda were found, and few of his letters had been preserved.

As his grandson, who was very close to him, I felt it but proper and fitting at this time that a biography should be written from original sources, which would conclusively prove that Isaac Mayer Wise was not only the most prominent figure in American Judaism during the last half of the nineteenth century, but also that he was the founder of American Judaism and all the many institutions which preserved that Judaism in this country.

My aim has been to let Dr. Wise tell in his own words the story of his life and activities, and, therefore, I have printed many extracts from his writings in *The Occident*, *The Asmonean*, *The Israelite*, and *Die Deborah*.

I have not attempted to give an estimate of Rabbi Wise as an author and theologian, because I am not competent to do so. In 1919, the several organizations which Rabbi Wise founded will celebrate the centennial of his birth, and undoubtedly those qualified to speak will treat that phase of his career.

I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to Mr.

Adolph S. Oko, Librarian of the Hebrew Union College, and Dr. N. D. C. Hodges, Librarian of the Public Library of Cincinnati, for their valuable assistance.

MAX B. MAY.

CINCINNATI,
July 21, 1916.

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Isaac Mayer Wise

CHAPTER I

THE EUROPEAN BACKGROUND

To understand the life and career of Isaac Mayer Wise it is necessary to know something of the conditions of the Jews of Europe and especially of Bohemia during the early part of the nineteenth century.

Prior to the decree of the French National Assembly, September 27, 1791, the Jews of Europe did not enjoy the privileges of citizenship. Not only were they treated as aliens, but the ancient prejudice against them still existed. Moses Mendelssohn, the friend of Lessing and the prototype of Nathan der Weise, summed up the Jewish question very accurately when he said[1]:

"It is wonderful to note how the prejudice assumes the forms of every century in order to

[1] Graetz, *History of the Jews*, vol. v., p. 361–2.

act despotically towards us (Jews) and place difficulties in the way of our obtaining civil rights. In superstitious ages we were said to insult sacred objects out of mere wantonness, to pierce crucifixes and cause them to bleed; secretly to circumcise children and to stab them in order to feast our eyes upon the sight; to draw Christian blood for our Passover; to poison wells.

"Now times have changed, calumny no longer makes the desired impression. Now we in turn are upbraided with superstition and ignorance, lack of moral sentiment, taste and refined manners, incapacity for the arts, sciences, and useful pursuits, especially for the service of war and the state, invincible inclination to cheating, usury, and lawlessness, all these have taken the place of coarse indictments against us to exclude us from the number of useful citizens and reject us from the motherly bosom of the state. They tie our hands and reproach us that we do not use them. . . . Reason and the spirit of research of our century have not yet wiped away all traces of barbarism in history. Many a legend of the past has obtained credit because it has not occurred to any one to cast doubt upon it. Some are supported by such important authorities that few have the boldness to look upon them as mere

legends and libels. Even at the present moment there is many a city of Germany where no circumcised person, even though he pays duty for his creed, is allowed to issue forth in open daylight unwatched, lest he kidnap a Christian child or poison the wells; while during the night he is not trusted under the strictest surveillance owing to his well-known intercourse with evil spirits."

Before the beneficial effect of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic era was felt in Germany and Austria, the condition of the Jews was pitiable.

Although Jews had lived in Bohemia since the tenth century, it was not until the reign of Emperor Joseph II. (1780–1790) that their condition was to any extent ameliorated.

Naturally the prejudice against the Jews was increased by the crusades which swept over Europe, and as they were in the path of the fanatical hordes pressing on their way to Jerusalem they were treated without mercy. In order to prevent the increase in population among the Jews the privilege of marriage was restricted. The number of Jewish souls in the community was fixed by law, and with few exceptions no marriages were permitted until vacancies occurred by death. Four years after Maria Theresa (1740–1780) became Empress of Austria she issued her decree

banishing all Jews from Bohemia by June 30, 1745. Later, upon the payment of a large annual tax, the enforcement of the decree was postponed for ten years, and was subsequently revoked upon condition that the number of Jewish families should not be increased.

Maria Theresa was succeeded in 1780 by a great ruler, Joseph II., and by his so-called toleration decree the Jews of Austria and Bohemia were granted greater immunities and more privileges. His purpose was not to scatter the Jews over the land nor to permit them to settle in places from which they were excluded, but rather to make them more useful to the state in those places where they dwelt in large numbers. Under the provisions of this decree the Jews obtained some civil recognition in the community and enjoyed commercial and trade privileges. Henceforth farming and industrial employment of larger scope were open to them.

Joseph II. increased the number of Jewish families permitted in Bohemia from 8541 to 8600, and in some communities they were allowed to live outside of the Ghetto, the restricted Jewish district. Joseph II. also abolished all laws prescribing differences in dress. It was also decreed by this liberal monarch that the Jews should draw

their contracts, agreements, wills, in short all legal documents in the language of the country under penalty of having them declared illegal. The Hebrew or Jargon was to be used in Divine Services only. Formerly the Jews had been forbidden to till the soil, now they were permitted to become lessees of lands and pursue agriculture, but they had to till the soil themselves, for during the ensuing ten years they were not permitted to employ any Christians to assist them. They were also granted the privilege of leaving their native city to study, and in Bohemia they could receive instruction in all sciences. Later it was provided by law that no one could become a rabbi who had not also taken courses in the philosophical sciences and the laws of nature at a National University; and in communities where there were no Jewish schools, Jewish children had to be sent to Christian schools. All teachers before receiving their appointment must have attended the normal school at Prague.

Under Frances II. (1792–1835) the effect of the Napoleonic wars was felt, but after Waterloo the reactionary party under Metternich had full sway, and the Jews again began to feel the hardships of restrictions. There were cities where no Jews were allowed to settle, in other places they

were compelled to pay special taxes, and they were always treated as inferior people and with great arbitrariness. The chief cause of this was the fear that the Jews would control all the trade. In those communities where the influence of the liberal spirit of Joseph II. lingered their treatment was better.

The greatest disability under which the Jews suffered was the restriction as to marriage. As the rulers did not wish to have them increase in number, marriage among them was restricted. The number of Jewish families allowed in a district was fixed by law, and no one was permitted to marry without a special license, which was difficult to obtain, except by the eldest son of the family, unless there was a vacancy created by death. Even where marriages were permitted the bridegroom had to be twenty-two years of age and the bride eighteen years. The right to marry was called a "Familiantenrecht." Rabbis, cantors, and teachers belonged to the exempt class and had the privilege of marrying. The result was that there were many marriages among the Jews which were considered by the state as illegal and the offspring illegitimate.

Such was the pitiable lot of the Bohemian Jew in the early years of the nineteenth century.

The hope of emancipation held out under the liberal acts of the great Emperor Joseph II. was quickly crushed by his illiberal successors, who, after the Congress of Vienna, were unwilling to ameliorate the condition of their oppressed Jewish subjects. The revolutions of 1830 had little effect in Austria, and the condition of the Bohemian Jews did not improve materially until after 1848.

In the larger cities the Jews lived in the Ghetto, and in the smaller villages they usually lived in one neighbourhood. Their life was separate and apart from that of their Christian neighbours. Outside of the larger cities of Germany and Austria, the education of the Jewish youth was confined to the study of the Talmud. In the early decades of the nineteenth century the young Jews, with few exceptions, had no acquaintance with the secular literature and sciences.

In an article entitled, "Recollections of Bohemia," written by Wise, and printed in the *Asmonean* of New York,[1] the following vivid and accurate picture of life among the Bohemian Jews is given:

"It is admitted by all travellers who bestow sufficient attention on Jews, that those of Bohemia

[1] The *Asmonean*, vol. ix., March 17–24, 1854, Nos. 22 and 23.

are, as a class, the best educated and the wealthiest in the Austrian empire. Jewish physicians, literati, rabbins, teachers, and bookkeepers are so numerous in that country, although the Jewish population amounts from 80,000 to 100,000 souls only, that they emigrate in all directions. Among those who preach Judaism in this country are four Bohemians, and no less than ten Jewish physicians of that country are now in the United States, although emigration to America is in Bohemia a rare circumstance. The poet Hartmann, Kuranda, the distinguished editor of the *Bruessel's Grenzboten*, both ex-members of the Frankfort parliament, Rev. Dr. Zachary Frankel, now of Dresden, the late and lamented Rev. Mr. Cohn, preacher in Lemberg, Rev. Dr. Meisel, of Stettin, Rev. Dr. Hamburger, of Prossnitz, Rev. Mr. Popper, present chief rabbi of Tyrol, and many more prominent clergymen; Prof. Klein, the distinguished mathematician, Moscheles, the celebrated pianist, M. Steinschneider, the orientalist, and a host of many other celebrities are Bohemians. There are more than fifty Bohemian Jewish physicians in the Austrian army. . . . The names of Landau, father, son, and grandson, Peter Beer, Herz Homberg, Dr. Wolfgang Wessely, Jeiteles, Wehle, Schlesinger, Wolf Mayer, Letteris,

Stern, are familiar to every friend of Hebrew literature; it needs only to be said that all of them are Bohemians.

"It must be admitted that it is unusual, we might say marvellous, that so many prominent men should spring up among so small a population, and under the adverse position in which Austria placed the Bohemian Jews up to 1848; but we are in possession of the key to solve the riddle. . . .

"1. The commercial and manufacturing interests of the land are almost exclusively in the hands of Jews, consequently they always were in possession of the means to give to their children a scholastic education, and to support the children of the poor to this laudable end, which is done nowhere in the world so extensively as in the city of Prague.

"2. Bohemia was the seat of the old Yeshiboth Talmudical colleges since time immemorial; Prague, Kollin, Jenikau, Kaledai, Ronsperg, Bunzlau, and other places are noted for such colleges. Besides this the Jews of Prague have a normal school of eight classes, where tuition is gratis, and a Beth Hammidrash; and all Austrian schools, from the village school to the university, give tuition gratis to the poor and to those students who pass a good examination.

"The Bohemian Jews may be divided according to domicile into inhabitants of cities and villages. In some villages ten to thirty families reside, but in others there are but one or two families. The manufacture of glass, porcelain, and cotton goods, the distilleries of liquors, the grocery, dry goods, and produce business are much followed by them. Some pursue agricultural pursuits, others are physicians, teachers, mechanics, etc., etc.; they represent all classes of society, and are superior to their rural neighbours in scholastic attainments and mercantile enterprise.

"In the centre of the village where Jews live usually stands the Synagogue, often a beautiful stone building with a brick roof and a Mogen David (Shield of David) on the top. Inside most of the Synagogues are plain, arched, and have high bow-windows. Next to the Synagogue is the dwelling of the minister and the schoolrooms, and around the Synagogue are generally the best houses of the Jewish families. Usually the Jews of some villages have one Synagogue in a central village whither they go to worship and also send their children to school. Twice a day, morning and evening, the Synagogue is open for Divine Service, and it is a rare case that no Minyan (ten male persons above thirteen years of age) is in

attendance. Friday evening and Sabbath morning every person attends divine worship, if one is missed in the Synagogue he is considered sick, and is sure of being visited by his friends.

"The minister of the smaller congregations is a hazan (cantor), shochet (one who slaughters the cattle and fowl according to religious rules), and sometimes the teacher. . . . In the larger congregations he must be a Moreh Zedek—a man authorized to perform rabbinical functions, and in the largest congregations in the country they have a rabbi, a cantor, a teacher, a sexton, and a shochet. We have seen in a place where two Jewish families resided, and around which village some thirty Jewish families lived, a temple built in modern style with an organ and choir put into it, and a rabbi and cantor were engaged to conduct divine worship, preach, and instruct the young.

"The children may attend the village schools, and do so in many places . . . but in general the Jews have separate schools. Instruction begins at eight o'clock in the morning and is continued until noon, generally in Hebrew branches, and is resumed at one o'clock in winter and is continued until dark. In the evening, instruction in the higher Hebrew classes is given

until eight or nine o'clock. A child is taught three different languages: the Slavonic, which is spoken in the greater part of the country; the German, which is spoken by all Jews and taught in all Hebrew schools; and Hebrew, the language of the Bible, which is understood by a majority of the Bohemian Jews. Reading and writing in these languages, grammar, Rashi, a biblical commentary, arithmetic, and some geography make up the course of elementary education.

"Besides these congregational schools, rich families, and those who live at too great a distance from the large places, have private teachers. Large sums of money are spent on these private teachers and they are treated with especial distinction. It is often the case that a man spends his whole property on the education of his sons, who support him and their sisters after they have entered upon public functions.

"In former times Talmud was one of the principal studies at every school, three to four hours daily being given to its study. When a child was six to eight years old and could read Hebrew it was sent to a Talmud class. When a boy had learned something so that he was deemed capable of a higher education he was sent to places where a Talmud teacher of some distinction resided.

Wealthy parents paid for the children's board and tuition; but the poor did not suffer, he had tuition gratis, most always also lodging, and good people gave what they called "Board Day," viz., one day's board weekly gratis; seven such good men generally supported a poor student. We knew one man who had twenty-five such young fellows in board, one day three and the other day four, who were treated as kindly as the man's children.

"Having made considerable progress in the Talmud the young student went to a Yeshibah where the higher Talmud studies were pursued under a distinguished master, and the young men were educated to be rabbins and teachers. The poor were supported in those places in the same manner; some got Sabbath board free and others earned a living by instruction of either younger students who could pay, or other children. After some time thus spent the young man returned to the business of his father, or he finished his education for the rabbinical office.

"The Yeshiboth life was a peculiar thing. Sixty or one hundred lads between the ages of fourteen to twenty, or so, came together to the room of the much venerated master twice a day and learned of him the method of rabbinical disputation in a

practical way. The passage on which the master treated had been studied previously, so that instruction consisted merely of rectifying the student and chiefly of training the mind in those sagacious disputations, which were strong nutriment to the reasoning faculties. Outside of the schoolroom there was perfect liberty. There was not in a Bohemian Yeshibah that bigotry, as in Hungary and elsewhere, that the students were prohibited from reading belletristical works, or that it was considered a crime to know Ibn Ezra's Commentary to the Bible, or Maimonides' *Moreh Nebuchim.* On the contrary, it was considered an accomplishment to have read Schiller's, Goethe's, Lessing's, or Wieland's works, and the young man spent a considerable time in philosophic theological books, such as *Kusari*, *Moreh*, *Chobath*, etc. We remember distinctly that we had formed a secret club for the study of *Cabalah*, and we met for this purpose three times a week from nine to twelve P. M., but when our old master found out the secret of our club, he earnestly exhorted us not to spend our time with such an impracticable study, calculated to make young men bigots and phantasts. He said it would be better for us to read Moses Mendelssohn's, Arbarbanel's, or De Rossi's works.

"The Yeshiboth and the Talmud study in general have given way in the past fifteen years to a modern education. When we left Bohemia (1846), there was almost no trace any more of Talmud instruction in the villages and smaller towns. Those unhappy old men who knew nothing besides the rabbinical literature held very poor places in small congregations, and not a few subsisted on public charity. The rabbi must have gone through a course of studies in a university, and the hazan must be either a musician or an examined teacher, and at length it became difficult for a teacher to find a place who could not show certificates either from the State Normal School or the Hebrew Normal School at Prague. The schools were improved by this change. Able boys now study Latin, geography, history, etc., instead of Talmud only. After they are prepared they go to an academy, to the polytechnical institute or to a commercial institute (Real Schule). Others who intend to devote themselves to a learned profession go to a gymnasium where they are prepared for the university, and then to the university. Talmud and other Hebrew branches are studied by those only who intend to become rabbins, and they must do so in private schools and after the college hours. An attempt was

made some years ago to establish a rabbinical college, but it proved a failure.

"Poor students are supported in the way we have mentioned before; it is therefore not surprising if we say that two-thirds of the young Jews in Bohemia who visit the institutes of learning are the sons of poor parents, and it is a fact deserving notice. We know one man who almost subsisted on charity, living now with his sons, two of whom are distinguished rabbins, one is a celebrated physician, and the fourth a promising young lawyer; and another, who worked a day for as much money as twelve cents, has three sons all of whom are physicians, and the oldest one is a medical officer in the Austrian army. Hundreds of such facts might be mentioned.

"One of the greatest deficiencies among Bohemian country Jews is, that the girls do not receive more than a common school education; it is a rare exception that one is sent to a city for the purpose of receiving a better education. But this is a common fault of Europe, and is not quite rectified in this country.

"The country Jews in Bohemia are very religious, sometimes superstitious, have good morals, and are industrious and enterprising. The family life among the country people is of a patriarchal

nature. The husband and father is the independent sheik of the house, the wife and mother is second in rank. This dominion is often regulated by laws of love and respect, but sometimes degenerates into a kind of petty tyranny. Unconditional obedience is required of the children, without distinction of sex or age; no vocation in life can be selected, no marriage can be contracted without the permission of the parents. Married children are considered independent of their parents; still, it is a matter of good deportment to pay distinguished respect to parents. There is that mutual attachment in families which distinguishes patriarchal family life, and domestic quarrels are rare, and almost never grow up to violent disaffections.

"The days of labour are devoted to business, and none are idle. The father, and the sons who have left school attend to some useful employment, many working hard. The mother and her daughter care for the domestic comfort. The Sabbath and holydays are highly valued. On Friday the whole house is cleaned and set in order, and cooking required for the Sabbath is done. On Sabbath evening everyone in the house changes his clothing, and the male portion of the family repair to the Synagogue. Meanwhile the lamp

with six to twelve lights is kindled, a white cloth is spread over the table, and two loaves of bread and a cup of wine are set on it. The mother reads the prayers, and everything around is clean, and assumes, as it were, a festive look. When the father and his sons have returned from the Synagogue every child salutes his parents with the solemn "Good Sabbath," after which the blessing is received: "May God let thee be as Menasseh and Ephraim," or, "May God let thee be as Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah," concluding with the blessing prescribed to the priests: "May God bless thee and guard thee," etc. Then the whole family sing the hymn, *Shalom Alechem* (Peace be with thee), everyone washes his hands, and takes a seat at the table; the father arises and recites the benediction over the wine and bread, after which the cup is given to the mother and then to every child according to age; the father then breaks the Sabbath bread and gives a piece to everyone in the above order. This is followed by the Sabbath supper, which is generally of an excellent kind. Meat is never missed, and, if possible, fish must grace the table. After the meal several hymns are sung, after which the father loudly speaks the grace. So, every Friday evening is a family feast to the poor, as well as to the rich, the exceptions

are very rare. If there is a domestic quarrel in a house, the Sabbath eve brings peace. This is regarded so highly that the poor are sent flour, oil, money, and meat on Thursday to have it for the Sabbath. . . .

"There is a great difference between inhabitants of cities and villages. This is due to civilization and scholastic attainments having progressed so rapidly in the cities, from which the country people were excluded by the influence of the government. Rich merchants and learned men generally leave their native villages and take up their residence in some city, so that the most intelligent and enlightened portion of the community are in the cities. There everything is revolutionized; there are but a few traces left of the old Bohemian Jews; everyone is modernized, or at least assumes the appearance of being so. Language, customs, habits, schools, synagogues, and views underwent a mighty change. In Prague, Toeplitz, Brandeis, Leipsic, and other places, synagogues with choirs, organs, and good preachers occupy the places of the old "Shuhl," and good schools, under examined and experienced teachers have almost extinguished the old "Heder." Talmudical celebrities have become very rare, and are only sought for if they are in possession of

a good university education. The sacredness of the ceremonial law is almost lost, and many a merchant violates the Sabbath.

"The most distinguished Talmudists of Bohemia are in our days Rabbi Samuel Freund, of Prague, Rabbi Aaron Kornfeld, of Jenikau, Rabbi Daniel Frank, of Kollin, and Rabbi Moses L. Bloch, of Ronsperg, all of whom, with the exception of the latter, are old men. The young rabbins of larger cities consider the Talmud a secondary affair and spend their time in the acquirement of modern sciences, although there are but a few of them who have not a considerable knowledge of our national literature. It is remarkable that the far-renowned Rabbi Rappaport is considered more as a philologist, antiquarian, and historian than a learned Talmudist. When he first came to Prague (he is a Polander) his reputation was very low in this respect, and we remember distinctly that he was looked upon as a third-rate man in Talmudical learning. The highly learned Rappaport is not chief rabbi of Bohemia, his authority extends no farther than the city of Prague, although his and his colleagues' reputation give them, by tacit consent, a certain and acknowledged authority. There is no hierarchy among the Bohemian Jews, and there never was one, although men greatly

renowned for learning always enjoyed the special respect of the multitude, which gave them an influence and authority. . . . Congregations are not as large in Bohemia as in Germany, and much less numerous than in Polish and Hungarian cities."

CHAPTER II

EARLY YEARS

VERY little is known of the ancestry of Isaac Mayer Wise. He could not be induced to talk about his early years, and often said they were too terrible to contemplate. No authentic data are to be found in Wise's writings; and, unlike many another great man who rose from humble beginnings to a position of influence and prominence, he never referred to his early years. While nothing is known of his maternal ancestors, there are a few meagre facts concerning his paternal great-grandfather, grandfather, and father. His great-grandfather was a physician named Leo, who had studied medicine at Padua, practised at Marienbad, and lived in the neighbourhood, in the village of Durmaul. This physician was known as Dr. Leo, and spoken of by his co-religionists as Leo "Chakam," the Hebrew for Wise. The son of this Dr. Leo, or Leo Weis, was Isaiah, who also studied medicine at Padua and likewise settled at

Durmaul. This Doctor Isaiah lived to be over ninety years of age. Besides learned in his profession he was well versed in Talmudical and rabbinical literature, and became the teacher of his son, whom he named for his father, Leo. This Leo, grandson of the Doctor Leo who had studied at Padua, was educated by his father and became a teacher. Leo Weis was never a vigorous man, and died shortly after the birth of his youngest child, a daughter. Nothing certain is known of his early life. Shortly after receiving his education he removed from Durmaul to Steingrub, a small village of a few hundred inhabitants near the town of Eger, in Bohemia, overlooking Saxony and Bavaria. In this village of Steingrub, in which there dwelt a large number of Catholics, Leo Weis was married twice. His second wife was Regina Weis. The families were distantly related. As already stated, nothing is known of the ancestry of Regina Weis. She was, however, a handsome woman, bright, cheerful, lovable, and devoted. She emigrated to America in 1867 with her son Samuel and later lived in Peoria, Illinois, with her daughter, Caroline Korsosky, where she died in 1880 at a ripe old age.

In July, 1877, Dr. Wise, *en route* to the Coast, stopped at Peoria to visit his mother, and he writes

delightfully of her as follows[1]: "You need not laugh, we must stop to see the ladies. Here is one of them, a wonderful woman. She is eighty-six years old, speaks, hears, and sees like a young woman, and goes every Sabbath to the temple even if it rains or is right hot. She tells beautiful stories of sixty to seventy-five years ago, and laughs over a good joke of today. She is never cross, never displeased, and has a kind word for everyone. She speaks, thinks, and feels as I do, and like me she laughs over the world's numerous follies. She looks like me, and is as incurable an optimist as I am. She is my mother. God bless her. I stopped over to see her and my baby sister."

Of this marriage there were born thirteen children, seven of whom died in infancy. Isaac Mayer was the oldest surviving son. He was born on March 29, 1819. The Hebrew date, which in later years was always observed as his birthday, was the third day of Nissan, 5579.

The family was very poor and barely eked out an existence. The father was the typical Jewish school teacher of the Bohemian village. Besides conducting a small school he performed all the necessary duties as functionary of the Jewish community, such as reading the prayers morning

[1] *Israelite*, vol. xxix., No. 2.

and evening, slaughtering the cattle and fowl, and officiating at times as minister.

Young Wise began at the age of four to attend his father's school; when he was six years old he received his first instruction in Talmud, and within three years thereafter he showed such precocity that his father was unable to give him individual attention. It was then decided that he should live with his grandfather, Dr. Isaiah, at Durmaul. Here he attended the Jewish day school, where most of the time was taken up in the study of the Talmud, and once a week the Pentateuch with Aramaic translation and Rashi commentary was studied. The young boy, however, had the advantage of receiving in the evening personal instruction from his learned grandfather, Dr. Isaiah. The following anecdote is told of his stay with the learned physician: "At ten the boy was invariably sent to bed, but the grandfather sat up till midnight poring over huge tomes. These midnight vigils excited the boy's curiosity, especially as he had noted a large wooden box which was never opened in his presence, but from which the child, who was supposed to have been asleep, saw his grandfather take books; the mysterious box was meddled with, and one day yielded to manipulation, when it was found to be filled with cabal-

istic works, with the mysticism of which the physician busied himself in the still hours of the night."[1]

When the lad was twelve years old his learned grandfather died. Inasmuch as his parents in Steingrub were in no position to care for him, and as he had already determined to become a rabbi, he set out for Prague, the capital of Bohemia, and at that time the centre of Jewish learning of Bohemia. He started on his journey afoot, with a small bundle of clothes and twenty-seven kreutzer in his pocket. *En route* he stopped at Mies where a cousin gave him five florins, and at Pilsen an uncle, an officer in the artillery, bestowed upon him ten more. When he arrived at Prague he at once attended the Jewish school called the Beth Hammidrash, which adjoined the Alt-Neu-Schul, the famous Synagogue of Prague. In his "Recollections of Bohemia," quoted in the first chapter of this book, Dr. Wise tells of the custom of the well-to-do Jews to give to poor and deserving students "day-board," so that they could pursue their studies. Had it not been for this custom and charity it is doubtful whether the young student could have reached the goal of his ambition. In later life he never forgot this great boon shown him

[1] Philipson-Grossmann's *Selected Writings of Isaac M. Wise*, p. 3.

in youth, and no young man who wished to study ever left him unassisted. In his home there were always to be found young men who lived with him, and when more than forty years later the Hebrew Union College at Cincinnati was opened he became the guardian angel of many a young student. In Prague he was assisted first by the widow of Rabbi Bezalel Ronsperg, an uncle of his mother. He also gained the friendship and assistance of a wealthy Jew named Moses Fischel, through a boyish prank.

Fischel's daughter was about to be married. It was customary for the bridegroom on the Sabbath afternoon before the wedding to give proof of his Talmudical learning before an invited audience. Young Wise and some of his fellows happened in the Synagogue and mischievously began to question the prospective bridegroom, who, entirely ignorant of his subject, which he had learned by rote, broke down and was unable to answer the questions. This disclosure so mortified Moses Fischel that in a fit of anger he boxed young Wise's ears. The next day Moses Fischel, rich and influential, sought out the boy and apologized for his conduct. Upon learning that the young boy was among the best pupils of the school he became interested in him, frequently invited him

to his house, where, when partaking of his hospitality, young Wise found generous sums of money under his plate.

Wise remained at Prague about two years. He was ever fortunate in making the useful acquaintance of learned men. At this time Prof. Moses Koref, a teacher of mathematics in the school at Prague, became interested in him, and in the evenings gave him private instruction in arithmetic, algebra, and geometry, and thus was laid the foundation for his scientific training, which stood him in such good stead in later years. After leaving the intermediate school, the Beth Hammidrash, he went to the high school of Jewish learning, the Yeshibah, as it was called. He attended two of these schools, one of Rabbi Loeb Glogau, the other the leading rabbinical school of Prague, conducted by Rabbi Samuel Freund, one of the greatest Talmudical scholars of his age.

About 1835 he went to Jenikau to attend the most famous Bohemian, rabbinical school, that conducted by Rabbi Aaron Kornfeld. This school had about one hundred and fifty pupils, and, under the provisions of the law in force at that time, any student could accept a rabbinical position provided a rabbinical court of three, technically called

"Beth Din," passed the candidate. In July, 1837, however, a governmental decree was issued providing that thereafter no one could become a rabbi unless he had pursued certain courses at the gymnasium and the university. Wise's liberal and progressive spirit may be attributed in a great degree to the influence that surrounded him at Jenikau. In the first place Rabbi Aaron Kornfeld, the head of the school, was opposed to the prevailing method of disputation, the hair-splitting method, or pilpulism, as it was called. He also recommended to his scholars the study of geography, history, and mathematics. The local rabbi of Jenikau, Jonathan Altar, had two sons who had studied at the University of Prague. These young men with whom Wise became acquainted had read the German poets, Goethe, Schiller, and Herder, and through their influence the imaginative and poetic young Wise turned to these masters of German literature and at once became absorbed in the best German literature of the day.

After the governmental decree requiring attendance at the gymnasium and the university, Wise went to Prague again and became a tutor in the house of Leopold Jerusalem. He successfully passed the examination of three gymnasium courses in his nineteenth year. Shortly after

coming to Prague, Jerusalem died and, as his children, whom Wise had tutored, were sent to school, Wise was compelled to find another position as tutor. Unable to find one in Prague, he was fortunate enough to be accepted as a tutor in the house of Herman Bloch, a merchant in the small village of Grafenried. In the neighbourhood there was a town, Wassersuppen, in which the assistant of the Catholic priest was studying for the priesthood. The prospective priest and rabbi formed an educational alliance, the former instructing the latter in Greek in exchange for lessons in Hebrew. Surely Hellenism and Hebraism were not at cross-purposes in this instance. Within a year he returned to Prague, and after six months' attendance at the gymnasium passed the examinations of the fourth and fifth classes. However, upon the recommendation of Rabbi Solomon Judah Rappaport, of Prague, he was elected teacher by the Jewish community of Ronsperg. As there were no Jews at this time who had passed examinations for the university, without which no one could become a teacher, the government permitted Wise to accept because he had passed through the five classes of the gymnasium. After remaining at Ronsperg for the year, he went to Pressburg in Hungary to pass his

final examination for the university. He went to Hungary because in Austria he would not have been permitted to take the examinations unless he had attended the classes of the upper gymnasium for a full year. While at Pressburg he also attended the rabbinical school of Rabbi Moses Sopher.

On his return to Prague he attended the university for two years, living in the meantime in the house of Rappaport, and tutored and copied music for a living. After leaving Prague he attended the University of Vienna for a year. Here he lived for a time at the house of the leading Jewish preacher, Isaac Noah Mannheimer, and here he also met Sulzer, the famous cantor, and frequently dined with both of these celebrated men. Soon after his arrival, however, he became a teacher in the family of Herr von Wertheimstein, a wealthy and influential man, with whose son he travelled in Italy. Upon his return to Prague he lived again with Rabbi Rappaport, and at the age of twenty-three (1842) passed a creditable rabbinical examination before the Beth Din, the rabbinical court composed of Rabbis Rappaport, Freund, and Teweles, who conferred upon him the rabbinical title of Rabbi, a title that he as President of the Hebrew Union College conferred upon sixty-one rabbis between 1883 and 1899.

CHAPTER III

THE LAST YEARS IN EUROPE

THE first and only rabbinical position in Bohemia and Europe held by Wise was at Radnitz, a small town near Pilsen, Bohemia. When the congregation at Radnitz in 1843 requested Solomon Judah Rappaport, the chief rabbi of Prague, to send them a competent man who could officiate as a rabbi, he stated he would send them a "new light," and, upon his recommendation, the recently ordained Rabbi Wise went to Radnitz, delivered a sermon, and was immediately elected. He was inducted into office on October 26, 1843, and took as the text of his inaugural sermon, Isaiah li; 1–3: "Hearken to me ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord; look unto the rock whence ye are hewn and the hole of the pit whence you are digged. Look unto Abraham, your father, and unto Sarah that bare you, for I called him alone and blessed him and increased him. For the Lord shall comfort Zion

and he will comfort all in waste places, and he will make her wilderness like Eden and her desert like a garden of the Lord: joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody."

In October, 1893, fifty years thereafter, Dr. Wise refers to his induction in office in the following manner[1]:

"Fifty years ago this day the oldest son of a Bohemian village schoolmaster and a minister of a small congregation, preached his inaugural sermon (Isaiah li; 1–3) before the large and highly respectable congregation of Radnitz, Bohemia. I was humbly aware of my imperfections and with little confidence in my ability to do justice to the sacred office." Notwithstanding his doubts, he began to preach in German regularly. Besides him, there was but one rabbi in Bohemia, outside of Prague, who preached in German. The young rabbi, he was in his twenty-fifth year, opened a day-school in Radnitz, and was able to overcome the opposition of the Catholics by obtaining the special consent of the minister of education.

At this time he was greatly influenced by the liberal movement that was in progress among the German Jews. While at the university there

[1] *Israelite*, vol. xl., No. 17.

appeared a book by Rabbi Samuel Hirsch, then living at Dessau, *Die Religionsphilosophie der Juden.* Speaking of this work, Dr. Wise wrote in April, 1889[1]: "We only wish to add that another book which appeared when we had entered upon the twenty-second year of our age exercised a similar influence upon the formation of our character and that was Dr. Samuel Hirsch's great work on Jewish philosophy. This book impressed us among the then small band of disciples of Saadia, Maimonides, Albo, and their compatriots at a time when wavering between the two standpoints of the crystallized 'Halachah' the rational and progressive theology of the Moorish-Spanish savants. Rappaport taught us the method of research, Sachs gave us the rules of pulpit oratory, and Riesser made us feel free, and Hirsch led us to think free."

Gabriel Riesser referred to above largely influenced the young boy Wise, "leading him into a new sphere of right and freedom then unknown to the masses of his co-religionists, and especially to the students of the Talmud." Gabriel Riesser (1806–1863) was the grandson of Rabbi Raphael Cohen. He studied law, but because of the disabilities under which the Jews in Germany lived,

[1] *Israelite*, vol. xxxv., No. 43.

he was greatly hampered in making progress in his chosen profession. The German Judaephobia aroused him, and he became the champion of the movement for the emancipation of the German Jews. Being rejected as an attorney in his native town on account of his religion, he sought to deliver lectures in jurisprudence at Heidelberg, but he was denied this privilege. Met by these rebuffs, Riesser was instantly aroused. Graetz says[1]: "Thus Riesser, who felt no particular call to work for the general good, was driven to become an agitator, not alone for the freedom of his co-religionists, but also for that of the whole German nation. He made it his duty in life to secure equal privileges for the Jews and to defend them whenever attacked. 'The unspeakable sufferings, throughout two centuries, of many millions of persons who patiently waited for deliverance weighed heavily upon him. His ideal was Lessing. In his first pamphlet (1831) he spoke with conscious pride, not alone against German rulers, but against the people who refused permission to the Jews to ascend even the lowest rung on the ladder of distinction."

In 1874, Wise, speaking of Gabriel Riesser's visit in 1856 to Cincinnati, says[2]: "Gabriel

[1] Graetz, vol. v., p. 599. [2] *Reminiscences*, p. 338.

Riesser, of Hamburg, the mighty champion of emancipation of the German Jews, and vice-president of the Parliament of Frankfort in 1848, travelled through the United States and visited Cincinnati in the course of his journey. It was from the journal edited by this man that I learned in 1831 in a distant village of Bohemia, that the Jew also had inborn human rights that must be respected by every honourable man. I still remember how he told the German country squires, soldiers, and pikemen, boldly: 'You have the cannon, and you have the power, therefore you are what you want to be, and will not let us become what we might be. Give us the cannon, give us the power, and we will be what we wish to be, and let you be what you can.' Severely as I was scolded by my aged Talmud teacher whenever I read a German book or magazine, yet I managed to procure every leaflet that bore the name of Gabriel Riesser, and I read it with childish delight. I had to weep frequently at the wrongs which he set forth and the mighty language with which he castigated."

Imbued with such democratic doctrines it is little wonder that the progressive young rabbi soon found himself in opposition to both church and state. Being summoned to Pilsen, before the

governor of the district in which Radnitz was situated, for referring only casually to the Emperor Ferdinand's birthday, instead of preaching a laudatory sermon as contemplated by the order directing especial service to be held in honour of that event, he refused to answer questions addressed to him in the third person, *e. g.*: "Is he a loyal citizen?" Saying: "I am not a he."

Mention has already been made of the restrictions placed upon the Jew's right to marry. The Radnitz rabbi married all Jewish couples despite the fact that the groom did not possess the much coveted "Familiantenrecht," the right to marry. When called to task for this infraction of the law he bitterly complained against its iniquity and unjustness, and stated he would continue to disregard so inhuman an edict. When questioned at Prague by a member of the imperial council in charge of Jewish affairs as to the cause of so many illegitimate births among the Jews, he pointed out that it was due solely to the barbarous restrictions of the right to marry. On account of his independent nature he came into conflict with the district rabbi, Abraham Kafka, and his position became irksome.

On May 26, 1844,[1] Isaac Mayer Wise married

[1] Record in Family Bible.

at Grafenried a former pupil, Theresa Bloch, the daughter of Herman Bloch, and the sister of Edward and Joseph Bloch, whom he had tutored at Prague. Theresa Bloch, who was two years younger than he, was a beautiful woman, small of stature, with a lovable and sweet disposition. She had a great fund of common sense and an abiding faith in her ambitious young lover and husband. The young couple were ideally mated, and with mutual confidence there began a happy married life which was to last for thirty years. His eldest child, a girl, named Emily, was born February 22, 1846.

In 1845, while visiting Frankfort, the young rabbi was a spectator at the famous second rabbinical conference over which presided Leopold Stein, of Frankfort, formerly of Burgkunstadt. This was the second of the three great reform rabbinical conferences that were held in Germany (1844–1846). The first took place at Brunswick in 1844, and the third at Breslau in 1846. The leading spirits of these conferences were Abraham Geiger, Samuel Holdheim, Leopold Stein, Ludwig Philippson, Samuel Adler, David Einhorn, and Zacharias Frankel. At the Frankfort conference the principal topics of discussion were the questions presented by the report of the Commission

on Liturgy which had been appointed in pursuance of a resolution adopted by the Brunswick conference. The principal questions presented and discussed were the necessity for the retention of the Hebrew in the public service, the prayers for the return to Palestine, and the restoration of the sacrificial cult; likewise the observance of the custom of calling to the pulpit men to read parts of the Scripture and the introduction of the organ into the synagogue. All of these questions were ably and fully discussed by the members, leaders of reform Judaism in Germany, and the young Rabbi of Radnitz who no doubt was in hearty accord with these reformers must have been greatly stirred and influenced by the debates; for nearly all the reforms approved at this conference were eventually introduced by him in America. It was this conference which, at the suggestion of Ludwig Philippson, the great editor of the *Allegemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, adopted resolutions declaring "the foundation of one or more Jewish theological faculties in Germany a worthy and high endeavour," and resolved "That a commission be appointed to interest the public in this noble cause." The commission appointed consisted of Geiger, Philippson, Stein, Holdheim, and Solomon. On his return to Radnitz one can read-

ily understand how Rabbi Wise soon became dissatisfied with his narrow environment. He had familiarized himself with the English language by reading several volumes of American-English reprints, among which were contained letters of Richard Henry Lee, under the *nom de plume* "Federal Farmer," on the adoption of the constitution proposed in 1787 for the United States. Wise had also read many novels of J. Fenimore Cooper, and was familiar with the English Bible.

In his fiftieth anniversary sermon, above referred to, he says: "I was well satisfied with my condition materially and yet I was morbidly dissatisfied with everything; the country, the city, Judaism and Christianity, everything in any State appeared to me a disappointment; my ideals were far above the realities, and I could see no prospect of improvement. I felt sick of home. The irresistible longing for other conditions; another state of things generally became to me finally the message to Abraham—'Get thee out of thy country, and far from thy kindred, and from thy father's house unto the land which I shall show thee.' All my considerations as to such a venturous step were silenced by the charge to Eliezer —'He will send his angels before thee.' 'You

must emigrate' became to me a divine commandment which I could not overcome in spite of myself.

"In an antiquarian bookstore in the city of Prague I found a collection of American-English prints, and in it a set of journals from the year 1780–1790. I purchased the whole and read with the heart more perhaps than with the reason. That literature made of me a naturalized American in the interior of Bohemia. It inspired in me the resolution to go to America, and against the will of my friends I did go and my family with me."

And so, being a progressive in his religious belief and democratic in his political views, he began to make preparations for his departure from Radnitz. When he applied for a passport he was refused with the words: "Do you think we opened schools for you to take your learning to America?" Nothing daunted, Wise resigned his position at Radnitz, and without a passport, accompanied by his young wife, and baby girl who had been born a few months previously, crossed the border into Saxony and proceeded on his way to Bremen whence he was to sail for the promised land. At Leipsic he met Berthold Auerbach, in Breslau, Abraham Geiger, at Magdeburg, Ludwig Philipp-

son, in Frankfort, Leopold Stein, and at Berlin, Michael Sachs, from whom he learned the art of pulpit oratory. Leopold Stein, who until 1844 was rabbi at Burgkunstadt, whence emigrated to America many Jewish families who settled in Cincinnati, must have impressed him very much. Apropos of his death, Wise, on December 15, 1882, wrote[1]: "It may be put down as a fact that reform among American Jews was accelerated by Leopold Stein, because many of our leading men and women in this country were educated under his influence and felt a rare attachment to him and his teachings."

About the twentieth of May, 1846, Wise set sail from Bremerhaven in the vessel *Marie* and arrived, after a stormy voyage of sixty-three days, at New York, July 23, 1846. After his arrival in America he desired only once to return to Europe, and then not to Bohemia but to Germany. That was in 1848, when discouraged at Albany he heard in the spring of that year of the revolution in Paris and throughout Europe. He then expected the formation of a European republic. His wife declined to accompany him, and both William H. Seward and Horace Greeley advised him to remain. After that struggle with himself and

[1] *Israelite*, vol. xxix., N. S., No. 24.

the subsequent fiasco of the 1848 movement in Germany and Austria, he never had the desire to return even for a brief visit, and often expressed himself as being heartily sick of the monarchical systems of Germany and Austria.

He came to America with definite plans and purposes, chief among these was to liberate the Jew from his narrow bigoted environment, to secure for him the enjoyment of equal political and religious rights, and to make him an independent and respected citizen of the community in which he lived.

He succeeded in all his purposes, but not without a bitter and fierce struggle. The succeeding fifty-four years of his life (1846–1900) are in reality the history of Judaism in America, for during that time he established the *American Israelite* and *Die Deborah*, organized the Union of American Hebrew Congregations; founded the Hebrew Union College at Cincinnati, and the Central Conference of American Rabbis. The history of the foregoing institutions is the history of Judaism in America.

He overshadowed every other rabbi in this country between 1854 and 1900, and, despite the opposition of the most powerful, he succeeded in Americanizing the Jew and Judaism.

During his half century and more in this country he held but three rabbinical positions, two in Albany, 1846–1854, and one in Cincinnati, 1854–1900.

CHAPTER IV

THE PROMISED LAND

In the summer of 1846 Wise arrived in New York with much luggage and little money. At the dock his knowledge of English prevented him from being grossly overcharged by expressmen, but brought upon him the abuse of the German drivers who, without delay, cried out derisively against the Jews. This greeting in the land of the free was a rude awakening to him. Neither did the city of New York at this time impress him favourably. In the first chapter of his *Reminiscences*, written nearly thirty years afterwards, he writes[1]: "The whole city appeared to me like a large shop where everyone buys or sells, cheats or is cheated. I had never known before a city so bare of all art and of every trace of good taste; likewise I had never witnessed anywhere such rushing, hurrying, chasing, running. In addition to this there was the crying, blowing, clamouring,

[1] Page 18.

and other noises of the fishmongers, milkmen, newsboys, etc. . . . All this shocked my æsthetic sense beyond expression. In the first few days I heard the sound of music but once in the street. This was produced by a wandering mediocre Bohemian band which thundered Turkish music. . . . Everything seemed so pitifully small and paltry; and I had had so exalted an idea of the land of freedom that New York seemed to me like a lost station by the sea; on the first day I longed to be away from the city."

During the first weeks after his arrival he opened a night school in the basement of the house he lived in, giving the young foreigners he found there instruction in English, but as he humorously says: "The experiment lasted only a week or two, for I discovered that I had poor paying pupils, and they discovered they had a still poorer teacher."

The first Jews to settle in America were of Spanish and Portuguese descent. They came here from England, Holland, Brazil, and the West Indies, and established congregations in Newport, R. I., New York, Philadelphia, Richmond, Va., Charleston, S. C., and Savannah, Ga. Between 1820 and 1845 there was a large immigration of German, Polish, and Austrian

Jews, driven to this country by the intolerable conditions abroad, due to the reaction that set in after Waterloo. Many of the immigrants were men of liberal views who had emancipated themselves from all burdensome religious observances. The earliest comers settled in cities where Portuguese congregations existed and affiliated with such congregations. The majority of the immigrants, however, established German and Polish congregations and benevolent societies in the above cities, and later in Boston, New Haven, Hartford, Baltimore, Albany, Syracuse, Rochester, Buffalo, Cleveland, Cincinnati, and St Louis. A large number settled in smaller towns and through intermarriage were lost to Judaism. In 1846 there were seven Jewish congregations in New York, two communal schools, and a number of Jewish mutual benefit associations. At this time there were but three German officiating rabbis in America: Dr. Max Lilienthal and Dr. Leo Mersbacher, in New York, and the Rev. Gustav Posnanski, in Charleston, S. C. Within the congregations, with the exception of the three, Beth Elohim, of Charleston, S. C., Har Sinai, at Baltimore, and Temple Emanuel, of New York, the strictest orthodoxy prevailed. Ignorance of Jewish literature was the order of the day, and there

was the same lack of decorum and discipline that existed in Europe. The old customs so religiously observed in the home country for the most part, were strictly insisted upon in the new settlements. Outside of the three reform congregations in New York, Baltimore, and Charleston, most of the German and Polish congregations were ultra orthodox. At this time, with the exception of Dr. Max Lilienthal, of New York, no rabbi officiated in any orthodox congregation. In these congregations there was usually the cantor or the chazan, as he was usually called, who chanted the services, the shochet, or the slaughterer of cattle and fowl according to religious rules. The prayer-book in use had been brought from abroad and was according to the Polish or Polish-German ritual. One of the greatest sources of confusion and abuses tolerated in the congregations was the custom of the many special blessings, the Mi-sheberakhs as they were called, and the selling of religious functions to the highest bidders, called Mitswoth, *i. e.*, selling to one the right to read certain portions of the law, to another to carry the scroll, or torah, etc.

Wise had brought with him letters of introduction to certain physicians in New York; upon presenting these he was advised not to have anything to do with the Jews, but rather to peddle or

learn a trade. This advice depressed him very much. However, he resolved to present one more letter of introduction, and this was addressed to Dr. Max Lilienthal, through whom he obtained the first opportunity to officiate in America, and who later, in 1855, became his colleague in Cincinnati, where they remained friends until Lilienthal's death in 1882. In his *Reminiscences*,[1] Wise describes his first meeting with Lilienthal: "In the morning, accordingly, I went to Eldridge Street, stopped at a small house, and rang the bell very timidly. A man in a dressing-gown with a black velvet cap on his head opened the door. 'I would like to speak to Dr. Lilienthal,' 'I am he; step in.' We stepped into a rear room which was his library. 'I came from Bohemia; here is a letter from Dr. W., your school friend, and here are some of my papers.' Dr. Lilienthal read the letter and the first of the twelve documents I had given him, then he went to the door and called, 'Wife, bring coffee and cigars, I have received a guest.' Turning to me, he gave me a friendly and hearty Sholem Alechem, Peace be upon thee. 'Hold up your head, courage,' cried he, 'you are the man, we need you.' In short, Dr. Lilienthal was the first one to encourage me and inspire me

[1] Pages 19–20.

with hope, and at that time this was of prime importance and significance to me. . . . Within ten minutes I felt at home, and the impression which I received in the Lilienthal home perhaps decided my career in America. Here I became acquainted with Jewish conditions and with persons of the better type."

Among those he met were a young lawyer who later became a judge, several teachers and rabbinical students, and many prominent merchants, one of whom, J. D. Walter, gave him a letter of introduction to his brother-in-law, an Albany merchant.

At this time Dr. Lilienthal was the chief rabbi of three ultra-orthodox congregations, preaching every Saturday in a different synagogue. During this season of the year the orthodox observed, as they still do, the anniversary of the destruction of Jerusalem, Tishah b'ab. Wise's tendencies are already shown in his comments on this service, which he attended at Dr. Lilienthal's congregation: "But what he said about the season of mourning had long since lost significance for me and I was really and truly moved to mournful feelings, not for the destruction of Jerusalem, but for the disappearance of Judaism in the Polish-cabalistical rabbinism and supernaturalism."[1]

[1] *Reminiscences*, p. 22.

About the first of August, 1846, Wise was introduced to Dr. Leo Merzbacher, rabbi of the Reform Congregation Temple Emanuel. Dr. Merzbacher was a learned and thoroughly sincere man who had had sad experiences in New York, and he seemed very sympathetic when Wise informed him that he intended to practise his calling. Wise added: "In case I fail in this, I will enter upon an academic career; and if I should not succeed, I will work. I am young, healthy, active, and have enjoyed a good education." "And do you intend to preach reform?" Merzbacher asked. "I can sacrifice everything but principle," was the answer. "Well, then, I wish you luck," said the New York rabbi. "That was a sad blow for me," writes Wise.[1] "Later I learned he received two hundred and fifty dollars per year because the congregation could not afford to pay more. Such were the prospects for the reform movement in New York in 1846."

In order to support himself at this time, Wise gave private lessons and spurned all suggestions that he should embrace Christianity. He undoubtedly would have continued for some time to tutor had not Dr. Lilienthal sent him during the last week in August to New Haven, Connecti-

[1] *Reminiscences*, p. 25.

cut, to dedicate a synagogue. Wise, who had refused several invitations to preach in New York City, willingly went to New Haven. The new synagogue was located in a hall of an upper story of a building. The services were well attended and the young rabbi was cordially received. In the New Haven *Palladium* of August 29, 1846, the following account appears: "The hall in the fourth story of Brewster's building was consecrated as a Jewish synagogue. A lecture was delivered in German by Dr. Wais, a rabbi who has but recently arrived in this country. This is spoken of by those who understand the language as a most excellent discourse, and the speaker certainly in his manner gave evidence of a most perfect style of oratory." The mis-spelling of his name induced Wise to change the spelling from the German "Weis" to the English "Wise."

For his services the rabbi received sixty dollars, to him a small fortune. Upon his return to New York Dr. Lilienthal informed him that the following week he could go to Syracuse to dedicate a synagogue there if he chose. The offer was most welcome, as he desired to get away from New York. Mr. Walter gave him a letter of introduction to the president of the Albany congregation, which was without a preacher. He went to Albany by

boat and was greatly impressed by the beauty and the grandeur of the Hudson. "I have seen and experienced quite a great deal in life," he wrote nearly thirty years later,[1] "but I can recall no impression that can be at all compared with that which I received on that day. The steamer seemed to be a floating palace, the people higher beings, and the Hudson a second Chideqel flowing out of the Garden of Eden. The lofty walls of rocks above New York seemed to shut off the Old World, and the steep heights in the vicinity of West Point were for me a mighty door, the grand gate opening into the New World. Overcome with awe and emotion, I could have embraced every mountain, every rock."

On Saturday, he preached at Albany in Beth El congregation, but his sermon was far above his audience. Nevertheless he was invited to return to conduct the holiday services for which he was promised one hundred dollars. The young preacher said he would write from Syracuse, for he wanted to go to Cincinnati, having heard that city praised most highly by a Cincinnatian he had met in New York. From Albany he went by train to Syracuse. That was his first railroad ride in America. At Syracuse he remained longer than

[1] *Reminiscences*, p. 30.

he had intended, because the synagogue had not been completed on his arrival. His sojourn was very valuable to him, and he got a good insight into the Jewish conditions of the smaller communities. "My experience in New Haven, Albany, and Syracuse were of the most signal importance. These German Jewish immigrants, mused I, have not lost their love for Judaism under the influence of their new political and social conditions. Hence desire for organization. They form congregations, build synagogues, and feel a longing for the living word. . . . There are life and energy in this new Judaism whether it now be conscious or unconscious. The people lack culture; they do not possess a true appreciation of the conditions among which they live. 'Tis well I have found my vocation and my mission."[1] During his two weeks' stay at Syracuse he came into contact with all kinds of people and learned their great faults. He also thought over the causes of his failure at Albany and determined, if possible, to redeem himself, and he succeeded. He gives the following description of his sermon at Albany, the sermon that induced Beth El congregation to elect him[2]:

"When my turn came I stepped to the improvised pulpit (there were no pulpits in American

[1] *Reminiscences*, p. 37. [2] *Ibid.*, pp. 43–44.

synagogues in those days, since the congregations gave no thought to employing preachers) with the firm determination to move the hearts of the assembled multitude, and I spoke like an old pastor whose flock threatened to dissolve. Hagar and Ishmael served as symbols for body and soul. I characterized culture and religion as bread and water, and likened the wandering in the wilderness to the course of human life. 'And she went and lost her way,' was the first knotty point. Here I was able to bring all my weapons into play. I passed in review all the faults and mistakes of all the centuries, and the listening audience which had never heard such a flood of words was completely overwhelmed and dumbfounded. Thereupon followed the second phase, 'And she threw the child under the terebinth.' This I applied to the inner remorse of the sinner, and expatiated upon this until the sobbing in the gallery (the place in the synagogue set apart for women who were not permitted to be seated with the men) became so audible that I was compelled to stop. Finally I spoke of the angel and the spring. This I called the voice of conscience and the perennial font of religion, etc., which unite mother and child at last in comfort and hope, and lead to a beautiful future. I concluded with an expression of the

hoped-for reconciliation and brotherhood of mankind. As I left the pulpit and glanced at the congregation I felt triumphant, for it seemed to me I had struck the right note at this time."

He was warmly congratulated by the whole congregation, and the next day he preached at another synagogue. It was evident that the Beth El congregation wanted the eloquent young man, not as rabbi, but as teacher and preacher. The distinction is hard to understand at this day, but in 1846 the conditions were very different. At that time the rabbis and preachers were not popular, in fact there was a prejudice against them as well as against cultured people because of their impracticability. Then, too, only the wealthier congregations could employ both a rabbi and a cantor. The cantor himself generally opposed the election of a rabbi. The cantor, or chazan, was the Reverend. He was reader, cantor, teacher, butcher, grave-digger, and performed the rite of circumcision. When it was suggested to Wise that he should apply for the position of preacher and teacher, he refused, saying: "If you wish to elect me you must elect me as rabbi. This is my province. I will preach and open a school. I leave to you the determination of the amount of the salary, because I do not know how

much is needed here. I will write no petition. I have never sought a position and will never do so."[1] After stating such conditions he left for New York to rejoin his family from whom he had been absent nearly a month. On arriving home he received the welcome news that he had been elected unanimously as rabbi of Beth El congregation of Albany. He left for Albany in time to officiate on the eve of the Day of the Atonement, and within a week was followed by his wife and child, and the family took up their home at 77 Ferry Street. In these days of high-salaried rabbis it may be interesting to recall the fact that Rabbi Wise's first salary was two hundred and fifty dollars a year, in addition he was allowed nine dollars a year, for each pupil in his school, but he had to bear the expenses of carrying on the school. The school soon flourished, and as the public schools of Albany at this time were not very good, the number of pupils at Wise's school was very large, increasing from seventy-six, the original enrolment, to one hundred and twenty in the following spring, when Wise's salary was increased to four hundred dollars a year.

The Albany career of Wise has been justly characterized as the storm and stress period of

[1] *Reminiscences*, p. 46.

his life, and may be divided into two periods. The first, 1846–1850, which covered the beginning of the great reform movement, including the efforts to establish an American Ritual, technically called "Minhag America," and the first efforts for the union of American Hebrew Congregations, ended with the break with his congregation in September, 1850. The second period, 1850–1854, begins with the organization of the new Congregation Anshe Emeth (Men of Truth), and deals with his further efforts for reform, the beginning of his editorial, literary, and historical work, and ends in April, 1854, when he left Albany to enter upon his duties as rabbi of Congregation Bene Yeshurun of Cincinnati, having been elected to that position in October, 1853.

CHAPTER V

THE FIRST ALBANY PERIOD—RABBI OF BETH EL CONGREGATION
1846–1850

PRIOR to 1848 two-thirds of all the Israelites of Albany, and also of America, were unable to read English. Their Judaism consisted of a number of inherited customs and observances. Most of them did not observe the Sabbath, and when away from home did not observe the dietary laws, or put on the phylacteries in the morning, "The laying of the t'fillin," as it was called. While at home, however, they insisted that the service must be conducted in the strictest orthodox manner, and, naturally, as the people came from various countries there were as many different customs or rituals as countries whence they came. Thus there were Portuguese, German, and Polish customs.

This divergence of nationalities resulted in a veritable Babel. Wise, speaking of this, says[1]:

[1] *Reminiscences*, pp. 70–71.

"Hence arose a Babel-like confusion. Blows passed in a certain synagogue in New York at the service on the eve of the Day of Atonement (Kol. Nidre) because one party insisted that at the close of the services a certain hymn, Adon Olam, be sung first, and then the conventional concluding hymn, the Yigdal, while others insisted on the opposite. Rudeness goes hand in hand with ignorance. A fight at the congregational meeting, the escape of the president by a window . . . lengthy and unprofitable altercations in place of debates, such things were common occurrences not only in Albany but everywhere. . . . In addition to this, the congregation looked upon those who ministered to it as mere hirelings, servants; the rabbi, the cantor, the sexton, servants, etc., were engaged and paid by the year or half-year. It was understood that he had to be the servant and lickspittle, buffoon and menial, or else he was dismissed."

The congregation was under the domination of the president, "Parnass," and he ruled with the power of a political boss, and so autocratic was his authority that no sermons were permitted without his consent.

Wise recognized from the beginning that it would be necessary for him to take a bold stand

to bring order out of chaos, to make the synagogue respected by the sister churches, and to introduce order and decorum, not only within the synagogue, but without. Speaking of himself at this time, he says[1]: "Now, I came among these people with a consciousness of independence and mastery which never deserts me, and with ideas on religion, political and social conditions so radically different from theirs, that struggle and ill feeling were bound to ensue. True, I might have acted more skilfully and discreetly, but being by nature fiery, earnest, and fearless, I gave expression recklessly to all my principles and views, for which the majority of my hearers could by no possible manner have been ripe and ready. In addition to this, I had the peculiarity of pointing out vices, faults, and weaknesses so sharply and vividly that in every sermon someone felt that he had been attacked, and harboured ill will toward me on that account. Old conditions had to be overcome and new ones had to be created, and antiquated abuses had to be corrected." Among the faults and vices preached against were the non-observance of the Sabbath, card-playing, the frequenting of the saloons, and giving of false testimony. Wise realized immediately that if he

[1] *Reminiscences*, p. 72.

was to hold his congregation and exert an influence upon them it would be necessary to improve the service and make it more attractive and intelligible to the young people.

In October, 1846, about a month and a half after Wise had taken charge at Albany, Dr. Max Lilienthal, of New York, suggested that there be organized a synagogal authoritative body to be called by the old Jewish name, Beth Din, a court of learned men who decided ritual questions. He invited Wise, of Albany, and Rev. Mr. Felsenheld, and a Mr. Kohlmeyer, a rabbinical student, to join him. Although the name Beth Din was not pleasing to Wise, nevertheless, he gladly co-operated with the others. At the first meeting in New York it was decided that Lilienthal should prepare a history for Jewish schools, Felsenheld a catechism, Kohlmeyer a Hebrew grammar, and Wise an American ritual or Minhag America. The Beth Din was to re-assemble in the spring of 1847. At this preliminary meeting in October, 1846, Wise realized that the only way reform could be accomplished was by introducing reforms. "The act," he said,[1] "must accompany the spoken word, because the general people understand the act better than the clearest word."

[1] *Reminiscences*, p. 50.

Dr. Lilienthal had received from Vienna a copy of the Cantor Sulzer's "Sons of Zion," but was not permitted to use it in the chief synagogue. Wise purchased it and resolved to introduce it in Albany. The first step necessary was the organization of a choir; so, with the assistance of a violinist, he first trained a mixed choir, which was ready to take part in the service in the following spring. The weekly sermon and the choir led to the second reform: the excision of certain traditional Hebrew prayers from the service. These were the liturgical poems, Piutim, the lamentations, Quinnoth, and the supplications, S'lichoth. The trustees readily agreed that this change should be effective except on the two great holidays New Year and the Day of Atonement. "Poor as the choir was," writes Wise,[1] "it still was the immediate cause of our getting rid of all the mediaeval rubbish at once. In this manner synagogal reform began in 1847. True, there was opposition, but the opposition was outvoted, although it was impossible to silence it."

Among the orthodox synagogues to this day prevail the customs, the Mitzwoth, the selling to the highest bidder of certain religious functions connected with the religious worship, and Shnoder-

[1] *Reminiscences*, p. 54.

ing, calling people to the pulpit to have read to them portions of The Law, Thorah, for which privilege various sums of money were donated to the congregation, followed by the Mi-sheberakhs, the pronouncing of special blessings in exchange for donations. Wise aroused opposition by modifying the manner of observance of these customs. Instead of publicly calling out the names of the successful persons, cards with the names of such as were to be called were passed around and the number of special blessings for each person at one service was limited to two.

During the winter of 1846–1847 Wise worked very hard. He taught at his school six hours daily and gave singing lessons three hours a week. He also read and studied English two hours daily, and listened to two English sermons every Sunday. In addition to this work and his regular congregational duties, he applied himself so industriously to the assigned task of preparing an American ritual that he had completed it by April, 1847. At that time he went to New York to meet his colleagues, but the meeting was a great disappointment. Kohlmeyer had gone to New Orleans and neither Lilienthal nor Felsenheld had finished the portion of the work assigned to him. A writer in the *Occident* of May, 1847, gives the report of

this last meeting of the Beth Din. He says: "Rabbi Wise then proposed a Minhag America for Divine Service. He had been charged with such a work, because experience teaches that in most places different congregations are set up and the strength of the Israelites is divided because the emigrant brings his own Minhag from his home, and the German will not give way to the Polish, nor he to the English, nor the latter to the Portuguese. Such cause for dissension would be obviated by a Minhag America, which would promote the harmonious development of the young congregations. The project of the Minhag as introduced by Dr. Wise treats of the Tephillah (prayer-book) according to the Din, that is, religious authority, upon scientific principles and the demand of the times, and shows plainly that the new Minhag must be based on these three pillars to be entirely satisfactory. The plan was read to the meeting and a resolution was passed to lay the whole question over until the next meeting in order to give the members time for deliberation and they were not to give their opinions until then, the question being one of paramount magnitude." It was likewise re-

[1] *Occident*, vol. v., p. 109.

solved that the next meeting should be held at Albany.

Wise returned to Albany with a heavy heart and realized that there would be no further meeting of the Beth Din. He received little sympathy when he complained to his friends. They advised him "to pursue practical aims." "After I arrived home," he says, "I embodied my plan in two English lectures which I delivered to a small circle of friends, because I did not wish to submit them to the congregation. . . . One of my friends asked me for the manuscript. I gave it to him, thinking he wished to read it. He, however, sent the whole thing to Isaac Leeser (editor of the *Occident*, the only Jewish paper in America, published in Philadelphia). Before I had given any further thought to the manuscript, I saw it, to my astonishment, published in the *Occident* accompanied by some notes from the pen of the incensed editor."[1]

Wise in his lecture said: "We have no reason to pray for the restoration of the sacrifices, wherefore all prayers having allusion to such restoration ought to have no place in our literature." Leeser, at that time the leader of the orthodox Jews in America, commented as follows on the plan:

[1] *Reminiscences*, pp. 55–56.

"We must emphatically object to any such form of prayer which as proposed by Dr. Wise should exclude the petitions for the rebuilding of the temple and the re-establishment of the sacrifice."[1]

A correspondence took place between Wise and Leeser. The editor of the *Occident* looked upon progress in Judaism as unjustifiable and reform as proposed by the German rabbis in their several conferences as destructive of Judaism. "But we say in all candour," he wrote later, "that any synagogue reformation except such a one as looks to raising the standard of decorum and propriety cannot be supported by us in our journal."[2] This controversy with Leeser had a decided influence on the young rabbi. He immediately realized that much could be accomplished by one if he had a healthy body, a cheerful disposition, and the desire and capacity for work. He also realized that he must acquire a clear and virile English style and resolved to study English during the summer. In this work he was assisted by prominent and learned citizens of Albany. Among those who cheerfully and willingly assisted him were the Hon. Bradford R. Wood, a member of Congress (1845–1846) and later Minister to Denmark, a lawyer spoken of in Wise's *Reminiscences*

[1] *Occident*, vol. v., p. 158. [2] *Ibid.*, vol. vi., p. 538.

as "Chief Justice Wood," and Amos Dean, Professor of Medical Jurisprudence in the law school of Albany, New York, and afterwards Chancellor of the University of Iowa. Wise spent the hours he set aside for the daily study of English at the state library, and the library of the Young Men's Association. He was introduced to Amos Dean by the son of a neighbour hazan. After he became acquainted with Wood and Dean, both of whom were progressive young men, he spent much time with them. Shortly thereafter he decided to deliver three lectures in English in answer to the weekly attack made upon the Jews and Judaism by a Baptist minister. The subject of these lectures was "The Messiah." In the course of the lectures Wise repudiated the idea of a personal Messiah. In December of 1847, Wise made effective use of his studies in English. About this time American orthodox Christianity was making decided efforts to secure converts, and the English Society for the Conversion of Jews had its agents everywhere, supported by nearly all the Protestant clergymen. The movement was especially distasteful to Wise because the preachers "aroused and fomented a sentiment of pity for the poor persecuted and blinded Jews." As the Jews were unable to read the tracts, the

missionaries did not accomplish much. Wise paid little heed to the conversionists until it was announced that "The Rev. Rabbi Cohn from Jerusalem," a missionary of the London Society for the Improvement of the condition of the Jews, would speak at a church for the purpose of forming a branch of the London Society. As the lower floor was reserved for the clergy, Wise resolved to attend the meeting. He gives the following vivid description of the meeting[1]: "I took a seat near the pulpit, and when the two Unitarian and Universalist ministers entered we agreed that they would second anything that I would propose, and I for my part promised to second their proposals. The pious men and women came in large numbers, and the church was entirely filled. Dr. Wykoff, the pastor of the church, in company with other prominent personages, came at eight o'clock. Among them was a little, dark, well-fed man with small black eyes. The meeting opened with prayer and song. . . . Dr. Wykoff was elected chairman of the meeting. Wykoff now noticed me sitting opposite the pulpit. He had to explain the object of the meeting. He coughs and stammers, and somehow or other could not do it successfully, for he

[1] *Reminiscences*, pp. 66–67.

and I were old friends. At last, however, the words were out and the unfortunate Jew was spoken of pityingly in the stock phrases. He finished and said, 'Does any one wish to speak on the subject?' The intention was at this point to introduce the missionary who was to speak his piece, but I anticipated him. 'I ask for the floor, Mr. Chairman.' Wykoff made a wry face, but he could not refuse me the floor. Nor did I wait for his decision, but began to speak at once. It was the first time that the voice of a Jew had been heard on this question, and I could count with assurance on the undivided attention of the audience. I surrended myself completely to my emotions. I analysed the subject thoroughly from the moral standpoint. I chastised the covetous affectation and the hypocritical sympathy of piety with all of the powers at my command. I refused determinedly in the name of the Jews all monetary support, because we ourselves provide for our poor, our widows and our orphans, and rear our children. . . . I had determined to treat the subject from the theological standpoint, but the repeated applause from the gallery convinced me that it was not necessary to do so. I contented myself with stating that I was prepared to prove that the Jew could be converted to

Christianity neither by gold nor by cunning, neither by persecution, nor by force, but that I considered it unnecessary to do so at any length at present. I then moved that the meeting adjourn *sine die*. The Unitarian minister arose with solemn mien and seconded my motion. The chairman could not do otherwise than put the motion. . . . A rousing aye thundered from the gallery. . . . Wykoff, happy to be released from his uncomfortable predicament, declared the meeting adjourned. The play was over, the audience went home, their faces a yard long. No similar meeting ever again took place in Albany, and whenever a missionary did come to town Dr. Wykoff brought him to me that I might explain matters to him."

Wise's bold stand, as well as his reforms and his insistence on the strict observance of the Sabbath, made him many enemies in his congregation. He, however, calmly pursued the even tenor of his way. About the same time he met Isaac Leeser, the editor of the *Occident*, a Jewish monthly published at Philadelphia. Leeser was born in Germany, but came to America when he was a young man and soon became proficient in English. He was an ultra-orthodox, and before coming to Philadelphia had officiated as a cantor at Richmond, Virginia.

In 1843 he began the publication of the *Occident*, a monthly magazine, and continued its editor until his death in 1868. Before 1850 very few German Jews in America could read English easily, and therefore few of them read the *Occident*, the circulation of which was confined to the English, Polish, and Dutch Jews of this country. Among the contributors to the *Occident* was a young clergyman, M. R. Miller, who wrote under his initials, "M. R. M.," and also under the *nom de plume*, "Talmid." In his articles in the *Occident* he "claimed that the foundation of Judaism lay in Christian mysticism." These articles called forth much criticism against Leeser and he came to Albany to request Wise to answer them. The meeting between the reform Rabbi Wise and the orthodox champion Isaac Leeser was most cordial. Wise shortly thereafter contributed several articles in answer to "Talmid" under the title, "Rejoinders to Talmid's Thoughts on Deuteronomy, Chapter xxx; 6."[1] In these articles Wise bases his arguments on the "rational Maimonidean standpoint." He was, however, conscious of their defect. "When I read my articles in cold type I found them very poor. The thought did not seem compact enough, and

[1] *Occident*, vol. v., p. 353.

was very often obscure; the logic appeared faulty and the style insipid. I regretted exceedingly that I appeared in public print. Much as I was gratified in having obtained a hearing for the rational standpoint, I was none the less mortified by my scribbling."[1]

[1] *Reminiscences*, p. 81.

CHAPTER VI

THE FIRST CALL FOR A UNION AMONG ISRAELITES

THE year 1848 played as important a part in the career of Isaac Mayer Wise and in the history of American Judaism as it did in the history of Continental Europe.

In the spring of the year the news of the political revolutions in France, Germany, Austria, and Italy reached this country. Wise, who had left his native land because of the monarchical tyranny, was greatly affected by those sudden popular uprisings. "The months of February and March, 1848, agitated me to such a degree that it was long before I returned to a state of normal calm. I became more restless and discontented than I had ever been before. One Sabbath afternoon I sat in the synagogue in the midst of my chosen friends and delivered them a private address as I often did. One of my friends came in and whispered in my ear, 'Paris is in a state of revolution; Louis Philippe has abdicated.' I jumped up elec-

trified, repeated the portentous words, rushed out towards the post-office where the bulletins were usually posted and found the report confirmed. . . . I ran from one newspaper office to another, but none had received any particulars. We had to wait fourteen days for further news. . . . Those days were as years of torment and uncertainty for me. I had expected the proclamation of a European republic and made preparation to go to Europe at once. Upon the arrival of one important news item after another, the establishment of the French Republic, the revolution in Vienna, Berlin, Hungary, Italy, etc., I felt patriotic for the first time. 'Back to the old home.' This word sounded within me mightily."[1]

He delivered an address at a public meeting called to celebrate the founding of "Universal Republic and the Brotherhood of Man." He recognized in the revolution the struggle of humanity against the stupid and stupefying element, and therefore his sympathy was greatly excited. Anxious as he was to go, he remained upon the advice of his friends, and on account of the unwillingness of his wife to return with two baby girls. And it was well that he did not return. "I probably would have been lost in the contests of

[1] *Reminiscences*, p. 81.

1848 and 1849, for I lacked tact and moderation, but I could not comprehend this at the time and I passed through a severe struggle."[1]

He was then corresponding with Isaac Leeser for the purpose of formulating a plan to bring about a union of American Israelites. There were at that time six Jewish schools in America, located in New York, Baltimore, Cincinnati, and Albany. "The school system in general was in a deplorable condition. Religious instruction was imparted one hour in the week by women. Leeser furnished the text-books, all ultra-orthodox. There were no Jewish charities with the exception of several decaying associations, and two societies in New York. There was no provision for widows and orphans, no hospitals. In brief, the American Jews had not one public institution except the synagogue. It was perfectly evident to me that Judaism would have no future in America unless mighty upheavals accompanied by constructive action would arouse the better element into action and awaken and attract the thoughtless and the indifferent, so that it would become reconciled with the spirit of the age and the opinions prevalent in the new fatherland."[2]

Leeser was in sympathy with the movement,

[1] *Reminiscences*, p. 84. [2] *Ibid.*, pp. 85–86.

and besides placing the *Occident* at the disposal of Dr. Wise, he, himself, wrote strong articles advocating the project.

As early as October, 1848,[1] in an editorial in the *Occident* on "Association," Leeser speaks of the necessity of union, and requests New York to take the lead before large masses are put in motion. "Could not a meeting of elected members of various congregations be held as a friendly reunion?" he asks. "This idea was first broached to us by the learned Rabbi of Albany, Dr. Isaac M. Wise; he wishes to see ministers West and East meet and exchange ideas." The editor then calls on ministers to meet, and requests them to send their names to Dr. Wise, and he also asks Dr. Wise to give his views.

In the December, 1848,[2] number of the *Occident* appears the famous call of Dr. Wise, addressed "To the Ministers and other Israelites." This important document begins as follows: "To my Brother Israelites in North America, I call in the Name of my God. Be firm and let us strengthen each other in behalf of our people. The Rev. Editor of this periodical has granted me the favour to give publicity to my views about the association

[1] *Occident*, vol. vi., pp. 313 at 321.
[2] *Ibid.*, vol. vi., pp. 431–435.

of Israelitish congregations in North America to produce one sublime and grand end to defend and maintain our sacred faith to the glory of God and for the benefit of Israel and all mankind. Brethren, though I am a stranger among you, unknown and unimportant, I make use of the Rev. Editor's permission to express publicly my views on this important subject. It is one of the holy demands of our religion to walk in the ways of God. God is a unity. Wherefore all mankind will one day be united for one great end, to worship in truth the Most High, to adore His Holy Name with humanity and purity. Then will also be fulfilled that God's name will be one. To bring about this sublime unity God has selected the people of Israel. Wherefore we may justly say our cause is the cause of mankind. Now, in order to fulfil our sacred mission, to send our important message to mankind it behooves us to be united as one man, to be linked together by the ties of equal views concerning religious questions, by uniformity in our sacred customs, in our form of worship and religious education. We ought to have a uniform system for our schools, synagogues, benevolent societies, for all of our religious institutions. Let us now direct our attention to the country where we live and the circumstances in

which we are placed. The majority of our congregations in this country have been established but a few years, they have been founded and are governed for the greater part by men of no considerable knowledge of our religion, and generally of no particular zeal for our cause. This naturally produces an enormous amount of indifference and each congregation pursues its own way, has its own customs and mode of worship, its own way of thinking about religious questions, from which cause it then results that one Jew is a stranger in the synagogue of the other Jew. It is a pity to observe that any man who is so happy as to have a license to slaughter, from some unknown person, can become a minister of a congregation and the teacher of the youth without any proof of his knowledge or religion and in the absence of any evidence of conduct as a Jew. I will be silent about the whole casuistic theology and ask only the community at large, What will become of our synagogue? What of our youth? You see we have no system for our worship, nor for our ministry and schools, and we are therefore divided in as many fragments as there are congregations in North America. It is lamentable, but true, that if we do not unite ourselves betimes to devise a practicable system for the ministry and

religious education at large, if we do not take care that better educated men fill the pulpit and the schoolmaster's chair, if we do not stimulate all the congregations to establish good schools and to institute a reform in their synagogues on modern Jewish principles, the house of the Lord will be desolate or nearly so in less than ten years. It needs no prophetic spirit to read this horrible future in the present circumstances. I lay down these lines before the throne of history as a solemn protest against the spirit of separate action and of indifferentism, which has taken hold on so many noble minds of our brethren, and I proclaim before the world, before the present and future, my sincere conviction that something must be done to defend and maintain our sacred faith. Nor is it too late. Everything can be done if we are united before God."

The appeal then continues and sets forth reasons why ministers and "learned laymen" should unite to bring about the desired union.

The eloquent rabbi then calls on Rev. Drs. Lilienthal, Kohlmeyer, Merzbacher, the Revs. Isaacs and Felsenheld "not to be the last ones in offering their views." "I pray them to assist my weak voice and call on all Israel." The concluding paragraph of this eloquent, stirring, and remark-

able address which outlines the program of Wise's work in American Judaism, viz., a union of congregations, a college to educate ministers, and a conference of rabbis, concludes as follows: "And may God the Great Father of all unite and bless the house of Israel! May he enlighten all men with the shining light of truth, be gracious to all who seek Him, and be merciful to all who have forsaken him. Amen."

The editor, Leeser, comments as follows: "Without endorsing beforehand all that this gifted son of Israel has said in his address, we beg leave to second earnestly his ideas about the necessity of a thorough union of Israelites residing on this continent."[1]

The *Occident* published during the first months of 1849 many communications on this subject, and in the March number[2] prints the circular sent to the various congregations setting forth the reasons for the union, *i.e.*, existence of evils, remedy, and plan of organization. These are: (1) Want of proper concert; (2) Teachers lack proper qualifications; (3) Want of good schools; (4) No knowledge of history and religion; (5) No authority to which to refer questions of doubt; (6) No means to instruct poor children; (7) Want

[1] *Occident*, vol. vi., pp. 435–436. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 581.

of proper devotion in homes and synagogues. The remedy is: (1) Union of congregations by delegates; (2) Education of youth; (3) Establishment of schools; (4) Discussion of subjects presented by congregations. Plan of organization: meeting of delegates at New York, each congregation to send one delegate; if more than one, to have unit vote, and convention to meet whenever delegates representing twenty congregations attend.

Wise immediately began the campaign for union; in lecture and by pen he sought to influence the congregations to appoint delegates. In the March number of the *Occident*[1] he writes in answer to the accusation of being an agitator, a reformer, and an office seeker: "I will never accept a salaried office from this convention; I will not give up the plan. You aver that I am a reformer to prejudice the people against a sound plan. To be sure I am a reformer as much as our age requires, because I am convinced that none can stop the stream of time; none can check the swift wheels of the age; but I always have the Halacha for my basis; I never sanction a reform against the Din." He then urges his opponents to send delegates to oppose him if he is a "reformer." "We will go on

[1] *Occident*, vol. vi. p. 614.

and erect a memorable monument in the history of Israel and bring it about that our children and grandchildren may still look upon it with confidence; that the house of Israel may have a solid centre to maintain its sacred faith, to justify and develop our principles before the eyes of the world."

But he was doomed again to disappointment. Although he preached a powerful sermon in New York he could get no support from the leading congregations. A recently organized society, called "Friends of Light," could not be induced to act favourably. Without the co-operation of New York, union at that time was impossible. Wise left New York gloomy, indignant, and depressed. On the evening before his departure Dr. Lilienthal asked him what he intended to do. "I am going back to Albany," he said, "and as truly as I am a son of a Jewish mother, I shall divide this American Judaism into two inimical camps, and they shall overcome the abominable indifference, repair the damages, and achieve the triumph of a new life by fight and struggle."[1]

It required, however, a quarter of a century of fight and struggle to bring about the desired result. Wise's activity in this first effort for union induced his congregation, in April, 1849, to

[1] *Reminiscences*, p. 92.

enter into a new contract with him. His sermons in New York had been well received, and he had a flattering offer from a Louisville congregation. To prevent the possibility of his leaving Albany a special meeting of the congregation was called, and he was elected for a term of two years at an advanced salary. At first this action caused dissension in the congregation, but after a stormy meeting on April 14, 1849, the action taken at a former meeting was adhered to. The contract between the rabbi and the congregation is a most singular one. The salary fixed was $550 per annum, payable quarterly, and $9.00 for each pupil in the school. The rabbi was to furnish suitable schoolrooms and heat them at his own expense. Notwithstanding the new agreement the dissensions in the congregation continued. The ultra-orthodox element was dissatisfied with even the moderate reforms introduced, and whenever a new reform was advocated the storm broke out anew. The principal reform now advocated was the confirmation of boys and girls on the holiday, Shabuoth, the anniversary of the promulgation of the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. In an orthodox congregation confirmation had never been sanctioned for boys, and it was considered rank heresy to allow girls to take part

in the service. The introduction of English and German hymns in place of certain traditional prayers likewise caused much discord. Another ground of complaint was the suggestion of the rabbi that the young boys and girls, after they left his school, should attend the higher institutions of learning in Albany. The tension was so strong that upon the slightest pretext ill feeling and discord were created. When Wise spoke to his friends at the Albany library they advised him to give up the ministry and study law. Indeed, at one time Wise did begin to read Kent and Blackstone to prepare himself for the bar if it became necessary for him to leave the ministry. The immigration of 1848 brought many cultured Germans to Albany, and Wise soon succeeded in organizing a German literary society which gave him much pleasure. "For me," he writes, "the society was an oasis in the wilderness, for there I found myself among my best, truest, and warmest friends with whom I could exchange ideas freely."[1]

[1] *Reminiscences*, p. 111.

CHAPTER VII

THE CHARLESTON EPISODE—THE BREAK WITH BETH EL

1849–1850

AFTER the failure of the first movement for the union of American Hebrew congregations, Wise took little interest in national Jewish affairs. He studied incessantly at the State library, devoting most of his time to the reading of mythology. He wrote very little for the *Occident*. In October, 1849, there appeared in New York City a Jewish weekly published and edited by Robert Lyon, an English Jew. The first number states that: "The *Asmonean* is a journal devoted to the advocacy of a congregational union of Israelites of the United States."[1] In the November 9, 1849, issue[2] appears a remarkable letter from Dr. Wise, in which he hails with delight the new organ. A

[1] *Asmonean*, vol. i., Oct. 26, 1849.
[2] *Ibid.*, No. 3.

few extracts from this letter give a good insight into his feelings and views at this time. "The first number of your paper reached me in my solitary closet behind the dusty barricade of large books of antiquity, and, to confess the truth, I read the first number with sincere pleasure. But I know what good you can do with your paper to the Jewish community on this side of the ocean. An American Jew you perceive has a twofold mission, to promote truth and liberty.

". . . In respect of promoting truth I thought it proper and advantageous that Israel form a religious unity of his little republics (congregations) that this centre may animate light where darkness yet prevails. I left last year my solitary closet for a short time to call on my brethren earnestly and solemnly to unite for the accomplishment of our mission to be strictly combined in our sacred cause. But I am ashamed and disappointed. I had to retire from the stage of public activity, my call died away, my design was misinterpreted, and all the pious efforts of my orthodox friends proved a total failure. Therefore do I sit again in my solitary closet behind barricades of vast tomes of antiquity and study restless dead letters to forget the living presence, to forget the shame and disappointment which I experienced. You, my dear

sir, promise to advocate the cause of unity in co-operation with our worthy friend, the Rev. Isaac Leeser, therefore take that grand standard out of my feeble hands and represent it to the people. If you think it advantageous to the sacred cause that I leave again my solitary closet, then call on me and, though opposed by the prejudices of a world, I will render my assistance; it is true I lost the battle, my hosts lay slain on the battlefield, but I have saved the mighty banner under which yet new forces may assemble; but if you think my co-operation (as I do) injurious to the sacred cause, then say it frankly and openly and henceforth I will be dumb. I will continue to forget myself, to subdue, and to bury my wishes, but with the glorious triumph of union I will triumph, too, when this grand statue shall be erected, and with American Israelites I will rejoice likewise."

The failure of the plan for union, and the opposition to reform in his own congregation were not the sole causes of Dr. Wise's depression and sadness. Just prior to these events he had been quite ill. His sickness was undoubtedly due to overwork. He had a presentiment of approaching death, and thought his lung was affected. "Two years of uninterrupted exertion," he writes,[1]

[1] *Reminiscences*, p. 97.

"without recreation and sufficient sleep had quite consumed my vitality, and the exciting events of the past months produced in me a nervous irritability which I could overcome only with difficulty. Friendly physicians called my attention to my pallid countenance, the blue rings under my eyes, and my listless and tottering gait. They prescribed various remedies, but I neglected to use them. I was haunted by a presentiment of death, and this made me disregard all medicaments."

About this time there arrived in Albany from Bohemia Dr. Joseph Lewi, who had been Wise's family physician at Radnitz. Besides physician, he was an intimate friend, and he immediately insisted that Dr. Wise change his manner of life. A simple diet, cold baths, exercise in the open air, and less reading brought about a decided improvement.

Shortly after the movement for union failed, the dissensions in his congregation due to his reforms increased, and a great grief came to him in the death of his second child, a daughter, Laura, aged two years. The child, who had been frail, died after an illness of one day. Dr. Wise became quite ill, his cough grew worse, and at times he was very melancholy. At the funeral of his daughter he forbade "pious" members of the con-

gregation to rend his garments or those of his wife, and he refused to observe the traditional mourning customs, such as sitting on the floor without his shoes. To vex him all the more his opponents circulated petitions asking for the abolition of the principal reforms he had introduced, and for the restoration of the traditional prayers containing references to the personal Messiah and the return to Palestine, but the petitions did not receive the required signatures. Some of his friends wished him to leave Beth El congregation and organize a new synagogue, but he did not wish to disrupt the congregation, and at his request his friends abandoned the idea.

The opponents continued their agitation, and Wise worked harder than ever, frequently until two o'clock in the morning. He resumed the study of law so that he should be able to support his family, if necessary. His first son, Leo, had just been born. However, there was no improvement in his condition during the winter of 1849–1850. Dr. Lewi insisted that he must go South for several weeks, and, with the consent of his congregation, he left early in February, 1850. "This journey," he writes,[1] "was the turning point of my career." As there were no railroads be-

[1] *Reminiscences*, pp. 126–128.

tween Albany and New York, and the Hudson being frozen, he had to travel to New York via Bridgeport, Connecticut. On this journey of sixteen hours his whole past was recalled. "With what high hopes I had travelled up the Hudson not quite four years before! How disappointed and discouraged I was now travelling back. I examined myself carefully in the mirror of my own consciousness and saw in my mind's eye a man physically and mentally broken, without any prospects of improvement, without any hope for the future." Such were his thoughts from Albany to Bridgeport, due, as he intimates, to the rough railroad trip. From Bridgeport to New York he went by steamer across the Sound. "The motion being different was very pleasant. I took supper, smoked a cigar, and viewed the clear waters lying so calmly below me. Then I gazed at the beautiful sky above me spangled with stars so full of mystery, moving in their orbits so noiselessly. And it occurred to me that I was a naughty child which wanted everything it could not have, which imagined that it understood everything better than its teacher and master. I bethought myself, banished my feelings of despondency, and arrived at New York cheerful and bright."

Upon his arrival in New York he called on Lilienthal, who told him how badly Rev. Dr. Raphall had treated him. Dr. M. J. Raphall, formerly of Birmingham, England, came to America primarily to deliver lectures on Hebrew poetry, but was induced later to accept the pulpit of the Elm Street congregation of New York, and soon became the leading orthodox rabbi in America. Lilienthal and Wise exchanged their sad experiences. Lilienthal told him of his intention to leave the ministry and to devote himself entirely to the education of the young. This he did shortly thereafter, and did not occupy another pulpit until 1855, when he became the rabbi of Bene Israel of Cincinnati, for which position he was enthusiastically recommended by Dr. Wise, who was temporarily occupying that pulpit.

After Wise told Lilienthal of his troubles the latter replied: "There is no help for you. If you want to be the Christ you must expect to be crucified. I will not. I shall do something else for a living."[1]

Upon leaving New York, Wise went to Philadelphia, where he visited Leeser, who also told him of his precarious position. It was during this visit that Leeser informed him that he was

[1] *Reminiscences*, p. 129.

translating the Bible into English. This Leeser translation of the Hebrew Bible was the only one used in America until 1916, when a new translation was issued by the Jewish Publication Society of America. From Leeser he also learned that Dr. Raphall's six lectures on Hebrew poetry had attracted much attention wherever delivered, and that Raphall expected to deliver them at Charleston, South Carolina, and incidentally to champion the cause of the orthodox congregation in the latter city. Upon leaving Leeser, Wise told him he intended remaining in Washington ten to twelve days, and might possibly visit Charleston. Leeser asked him to send him the first lecture delivered there. The next day Wise left for Washington.

In the spring of 1850 the country was eagerly awaiting the settlement of the grave questions growing out of the Mexican War. The Congress that had retired with Polk in March, 1849, had left the status of New Mexico and California unsettled, and when Taylor, a Southern slaveholder, was inaugurated, the South believed her rights secure. California, without waiting for Congressional authority, having adopted a state constitution expressly prohibiting slavery, was applying for admission into the Union. The Congress which assembled in December, 1849, was a remarka-

ble body. The Senate, divided equally between the free and slave states, was composed of the ablest men in public life, and without doubt was stronger than it had ever been in the history of the country. Naturally the giants of the Senate were Webster, Clay, and Calhoun. Besides these three great men there were many other notable ones, some serving their last term, others just entering on glorious and illustrious careers, and again others upon whom the mantles of departing leaders were to fall. Among the former was Benton, of Missouri; among the rising stars were Seward, Chase, and Hale, and of the new leaders Douglas and Jefferson Davis were to be the most prominent during the coming decade.

The question uppermost in the minds of all was slavery. The South wished to extend the slave territory, and the North to prevent any extension. It was evident that a crisis was at hand, and Henry Clay, despite his years and failing health, was ready as ever with his usual panacea, compromise. This he sought to accomplish by admitting California as a free state, to make New Mexico a territory without slavery; the fugitive slave law was to be made more stringent, Congress was not to interfere with slavery in the District of Columbia, and Texas was to be paid millions in exchange

for certain of her territory which was to become a part of New Mexico. His measure was introduced at the end of January, 1850, and within a week an epoch-making debate was in progress upon this scheme, a debate which was to be the making and unmaking of illustrious men, a discussion in which statesmen who, during the past forty years, had become world-renowned orators, were to make their last appearance in the public forum.

During his short stay in Washington, Wise was in constant attendance at the Senate, and had the good fortune to hear, and was greatly impressed by many of the famous and now historical speeches on the Compromise of 1850, though he is mistaken when he writes[1] that he left Washington an hour after the passage of the Omnibus Bill. During his sojourn he met William H. Seward, whom he knew in Albany, and dined with Webster. Seward introduced him to President Taylor. Both Webster and Seward promised to secure for him positions in colleges if he felt inclined to teach. Dr. Wise writes of his visit as follows[2]: "My sojourn in Washington had an Americanizing influence on me. I felt that I was one of the American people although I had not yet been naturalized, and from that time I said 'we,' 'us' and 'our' quite uncon-

[1] *Reminiscences*, p. 141. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 139.

sciously whenever I spoke of American affairs. I felt greatly uplifted and aroused by this intercourse with the greatest spirits of the country and the kindly reception wherewith I met. The intellectual eight-day combat that I witnessed in the Senate stirred me mightily, enlarged my horizon, refreshed my mind, and taught me what was needed to become an English orator."

While at Washington he was invited by the reform congregation of Charleston, South Carolina, to address them. In extending the invitation the congregation informed him of the attacks Dr. Raphall was making upon reform. Wise accepted with alacrity, and arrived at Charleston in good health and spirits, and realized that much of his illness was imaginary.

The reform congregation, Beth Elohim, of Charleston, consisted of Americans of Portuguese descent. Its preacher and leader, Rev. Gustav Posnanski, was a German. The reform movement in this congregation began as early as 1824 when forty-seven members of the congregation, dissatisfied with the services, memorialized the Board of Trustees for a reform of the ritual, which was granted. More radical reforms were introduced after 1836 when Rev. Mr. Posnanski took charge. An organ was placed in the synagogue when it was

rebuilt after the fire of 1838; in 1843 the observance of the second-day holidays was abolished and the congregation worshipped with uncovered heads. Thus, in March, 1850, Beth Elohim was the most advanced reform congregation in America. Dr. Wise's sermon, "The Effect of Biblical Theology," was well received. Dr. Raphall was preaching for orthodoxy while Wise expounded the cause of reform Judaism. Before Wise's arrival at Charleston a public debate between Raphall and Posnanski had been arranged, and Wise was a spectator. He readily surmised that neither debater had a first-hand knowledge of rabbinical literature. "Raphall," he writes,[1] "was being worsted, for Posnanski was a skilled dialectician and remained calm, while Raphall became excited and declaimed violently. Finally Raphall grew angry and glowed with holy zeal. Instead of arguing, he began to catechize. He asked the public, and, finally, myself personally, 'Do you believe in the personal Messiah? Do you believe in the bodily resurrection?' The unhesitating direct answer in a loud and decisive manner was 'No.' This ended the drama. Raphall seized his books, rushed angrily out of the hall followed by his whole party. He had apparently given

[1] *Reminiscences*, p. 149.

up the fight. Raphall departed at the end of that week. I preached on the following Sabbath and left in the evening for New York by steamer, for I wished to take an ocean trip.

"I left Charleston in perfect health, thoroughly Americanized. I had gained a large circle of new friends, among whom were men and women of considerable influence. I felt exalted, vivacious, and energetic."

Shortly after his arrival at Albany he received word of his unanimous election as rabbi of Beth Elohim. The call was a most welcome one, for he felt there would be no congregational bickerings. Upon receiving his wife's consent, he accepted the offer, and resigned his position in Beth El congregation to take effect April 15, 1850. His friends approved of his action, not that they wished him to leave, but because they believed he had not been treated properly by many members. Resolutions of goodwill and appreciation signed by the president, ex-president, and many of the trustees, were printed in the *Asmonean* of April 5, 1850.[1] His opponents acted as on former occasions, begging him to remain and promising him support in all his efforts.

The horrors of yellow fever were pointed out to

[1] Vol. i., No. 24.

his wife and relatives, who finally induced him, much against his will and inclination, to withdraw his resignation. "I finally acquiesced in the folly and the wrong of remaining and permitted myself to be re-elected in Albany for three years. The joy was great; feasts of reconciliation were celebrated; I was overwhelmed with costly gifts, the heavens were without a cloud. I could, however, not rejoice because I knew I had acted foolishly and wrongly. In this mood I wrote the letter of declination to Charleston. This was received in ill part there, but the step was irrevocable."[1]

Wise had been elected at Albany in 1849 for a term of two years; he was now re-elected for a term of three years at the same salary. An additional sum of two hundred dollars per annum was to be subscribed by some of the members. At the same meeting a new president, Louis Spanier, was chosen, and this man soon became Wise's bitterest enemy.

Within a week after Wise's re-election at Albany he wrote to the *Asmonean*,[2] answering an anonymous letter attacking him for refusing the Charleston position. This attack accused him of remaining in Albany because of an increase in salary, and

[1] *Reminiscences*, p. 152. [2] Vol. i., No. 26, April 19, 1850.

also stated that he had practically sold out reform, as he could render better services in that cause in Charleston than in Albany. In his reply Wise, after stating that this letter was malicious in tone and setting forth that he could not resist the pleadings of his many friends to remain in Albany, writes: "But what vital difference is it if I am in Charleston or in Albany? I am rather inclined to think every man and every woman of the congregation Beth Elohim of Charleston is a true-hearted reformer, and every meeting in their synagogue a new guaranty for the duration of their sentiments; while the congregations in the North are still dead, they still shut up their ears not to hear the violent cry of the demands of the time; they still blind their eyes not to see the downfall of Judaism, the expiration of our sacred faith. Therefore I think if I can do anything for the benefit of Judaism, I can do much more here in the North than in Charleston. But if anybody can convince me that I am at any other place of more benefit to Judaism I am always ready to go, to the Pole, or to the Equator, to Ethiopia, or to Patagonia." The letter then sets forth what he has already done for reform, and continues: "You see, my anonymous friend, that I have not sold my convictions for base money, and I can heartily

assure you that I shall remain faithfully devoted and sincerely attached to the sacred cause of Judaism, which, in my humble opinion, can prosper only in and through reform which dare by no means be a partial one."

The publication of this letter was followed by abusive letters signed by "Israel."[1] Rev. Mr. A. Rice, an orthodox preacher, of Baltimore, in the same number of the *Asmonean* writes: "I will herewith show that the man who agrees with the reformers of the Charleston congregation, Beth Elohim, has no longer a right or a voice to talk about Judaism." Wise's reply is printed in the *Asmonean* of May 3, 1850. He treats the abusive letter of "Israel" with contempt and answers the Rice letter in detail, refuting the former's arguments with biblical and Talmudical quotations.

In the *Occident* there also appeared attacks on Wise because of the answers he made to the categorical questions of Dr. Raphall. The orthodox party under Raphall's leadership now began to make Wise's position in Albany very unpleasant. Louis Spanier for some unknown reason lent himself to this movement. When Dr. Wise complained to him of the unbecoming conduct of the cantor, Spanier only mildly reprimanded that

[1] *Asmonean*, vol. i., No. 26.

official. No member of the Board was permitted to have his store open on the Sabbath. A friend of Spanier violated this rule, and when Wise insisted over the latter's objection on preaching against this infraction, Spanier and some of his friends left the synagogue. The congregational affairs were becoming more unsettled, and the breach between Wise's friends and opponents was widening daily. The crisis came in July, 1850. At the request of President Spanier two sets of charges were preferred against Rabbi Wise. One set forth, "that as Dr. Wise had denied the coming of the Messiah and the (bodily) resurrection of the dead he is consequently an apostate who has no position in the life to come according to the highest rabbinical authority universally recognized." The second petition contained six specific charges: "(1) In one of his recent sermons he declared all prayer in a dead language (Hebrew) to be but a superstitious performance and all ceremonies like Tephilin and Zisith, which have no longer any meaning, as superfluous and unnecessary; (2) He tries to make us forget our old beautiful prayers which we have inherited from our fathers and wants us to replace them by newfangled prayers of the Offenbacher synagogues and the so-called Templars; (3) In his first sermon after

his election he said: 'From the fact that he permitted himself to be elected by the reform congregation of Charleston, they had to infer that he stands for reformation, and one that is further reaching than that at Charleston.' If a Jew is in favour of a reform religion like that of the congregation Beth Elohim, in Charleston, it is bad enough, but if he wants to go still further in reforming he can be a Jew no longer; (4) They have heard that he was seen writing on Rosh-Hashanah (New Year) in an Odd Fellows Lodge; (5) They heard that on a Sabbath he was seen swinging himself in the Mineral Spring Garden (Geschwungen in a Schwing); (6) He ridiculed publicly the woman's ritual bath."[1]

These petitions, signed by twelve members, asked for an investigation of the charges and a dismissal of Wise if proven guilty. The bitter opponents of Wise gave serious attention to the charges, copies of which were delivered to him with the direction that he submit his defence in writing to the president by the fourteenth day of July, at ten o'clock "precisely." Wise sent his reply on July 12, 1850. "He knew of no law in this country," he writes,[2] "which requires a man

[1] *History of Beth Emeth Congregation*, Albany, 1910, pp. 46–47.
[2] *History of Albany Congregation*, p. 48.

to defend himself in writing unless confronted by his accusers. For the sake of peace he will consent to defend himself orally, and in the presence of his accusers, and for this purpose they may fix a certain time and place."

At a meeting of the trustees on July 24, 1850, attended by a bare majority, it was resolved "that Dr. Wise's salary due on July 14th previously should be stopped until the congregation at its next meeting should decide whether or not it should proceed."[1] The meeting which usually took place on the night of the second day of New Year was held on September 5th, two days before the Jewish New Year. The meeting was a long stormy one. Louis Spanier, without permitting Dr. Wise a personal defence, placed the charges before the meeting. The friends of Wise insisted that as the meeting was a special one, and as no notice had been given of the intention to consider the charges, it was not permissible to debate them. A motion to adjourn was made, and when President Spanier refused to put the motion to a vote, Vice-President Sporberg called for the question and declared the motion carried, and the meeting adjourned. Wise's friends left, but about forty-three members, including a minority of the

[1] *History of Albany Congregation*, p. 48.

trustees, remained. Spanier then brought forward the charges and the meeting declared the contract between the congregation and Dr. Wise null and void and deposed Dr. Wise from office and refused to pay him his back salary. Upon receiving a copy of the resolutions, Wise immediately notified the president that "According to law, and at the request of the majority of the trustees, he shall remain in office and perform all the duties pertaining thereto."[1]

It was then apparent that there would be trouble at the service on New Year's day. When Dr. Wise entered the synagogue he found his seat on the platform occupied by one of Spanier's friends, whereupon he took a seat in the body of the synagogue near the ark. In his *Reminiscences* he describes what followed[2]: "Excitement ruled the hour. Everything was quiet as the grave. Finally the choir sings Sulzer's great *En Komokho*. At the conclusion of the song I stepped before the ark to take out the scrolls of the law as usual and to offer prayer. Spanier steps in my way and without saying a word smites me with his fist so that my cap falls from my head. This was the signal for an uproar, the like of which I

[1] *History of Albany Congregation*, p. 48.
[2] P. 165.

never experienced. The people acted like furies. It was as though the synagogue had burst forth in a flaming conflagration. Within two minutes the whole assembly was a struggling mass. I finally reached home bowed with pain and inexpressible grief. The constable came and arrested me as the ringleader of a rebellious mob at a public service. Who can describe that terrible day? Not I. It was an agonizing hellish torture. This victory of orthodoxy proved its grave wherein it was buried."

Numerous lawsuits grew out of the disgraceful proceedings. Most of them were dismissed. The case of Wise against Louis Spanier for assault and battery was tried the following May. This suit probably would not have been pressed had it not been for Spanier's boast to Wise. "Louis Spanier," said Dr. Wise, "there is a law to which I can appeal." Spanier replied, "I have a hundred thousand dollars more than you. I do not fear the law. I will ruin you." The *Asmonean* of May 23, 1851,[1] and the *Occident* of June, 1851,[2] contain a detailed account of the trial in the mayor's court on May 17, 1851. The court held that Dr. Wise was bound to preach on New Year's day; that only a minority of the congregation had

[1] Vol. iv., No. 5. [2] Vol. ix., p. 166.

cancelled his contract, that the action was illegal; that Louis Spanier had no right to interfere with him, and that he inflicted blows upon him. "That the defendant committed an assault and battery on the minister in the pulpit in the presence of the congregation, and when he was told by the plaintiff that the arm of justice should reach him, he answered he was too rich to fear the law." The jury awarded the plaintiff one thousand dollars damages and his costs. Wise never sought to collect the judgment. He states[1]: "I never received one thousand dollars because I did not want them. It was enough for me that the law had decided that my conduct was lawful, while my opponent's acts were illegal. He (Spanier) retired as president shortly afterwards, left Albany, and died a few years later in his prime. May God forgive his sins. I have forgiven him long ago. If, however, any member of his family is still living I beg him or them to consider me a friend and to turn to me trustingly in case of need."

[1] *Reminiscences*, pp. 205–206.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SECOND ALBANY PERIOD—ORGANIZATION OF CONGREGATION ANSHE EMETH, MEN OF TRUTH

1850–1854

BETH EL congregation had been closed by the sheriff on New Year's day to prevent further breaches of the peace. So the following day services were held by Dr. Wise in his home. This service was largely attended by his friends and the entire choir. And on the following day Dr. Wise dismissed the school for two weeks.

He now took counsel with his friends at the State library. They urged him to leave the ministry and enter the law, and a time was set for the bar examination. However, Wise was in a state of great doubt and uncertainty, and spent the whole afternoon in considering the grave question. That evening while still wavering as to his decision, he was asked to attend a meeting called by the most prominent members of the congregation. The men assembled were earnest

and enthusiastic, and they told Wise that they would no longer remain members of Beth El congregation and were willing to organize a new reform congregation, provided he would become its rabbi and leader. He finally consented, and arrangements were made to incorporate the new congregation, which was done shortly thereafter under the name Anshe Emeth, Men of Truth. Wise's library friends[1] thought he had made a great mistake in yielding to the importunities of his congregational friends. But it was most fortunate for Judaism in America that he decided to remain in the ministry. At that time he was undoubtedly the foremost Jewish reformer in the country, and among the ablest of all the rabbis, both reform and orthodox. His views were well known and he had the magnetism to attract to himself and his cause young, loyal, and fearless followers.

Within a week his friends had rented rooms on the upper floor of a building on the corner of Lydius (now Madison) Avenue, and South Pearl Street, and in this temporary house of worship were held the services on the holiest day of the year, Yom Kippur, Day of Atonement. Speaking of this service, Wise says[2]:

[1] These were Wood, Dean, and other lawyers and litterati who interested themselves in his welfare. [2] *Reminiscences*, p. 174.

"The congregation was assembled in this uninviting place. They sat on rough benches, and yet all were present, women and girls, men and boys, not one missing. A spirit of devotion and exaltation such as is rarely met with pervaded the assembly. This day was one of the most touching of my whole life. The room was crowded all day long (services on this holy day continue throughout the day). A new spirit seemed to possess all. A band of courageous and spirited champions of progressive Judaism possessed of an inexpressible enthusiasm had arisen out of the defeat which we had suffered. On that Yom Kippur day I saw American Judaism arise out of the grave to go forth to ever new triumphs, and it has not deceived me in my expectations."

During the last century it was customary in America for new congregations to solicit funds in larger Jewish communities, and Dr. Wise, within a short time after the organization of Anshe Emeth congregation, set out on such a mission. During his long and eventful career he travelled in the interest of American Judaism more than any other rabbi in this country, and much of his success is due to the fact that he came into personal contact with more Jews in America than any other man. His genial manner, his democratic

ways, and his oratorical powers caused hundreds, and later thousands, to rally around his standard of reform. On this, the first of his pilgrimages among the Jews, he visited New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington. In New York he did not meet with a hearty welcome, though with the aid of some influential men he succeeded in collecting a large sum of money. From New York he went to Philadelphia where he was received more cordially. He preached a strong sermon on reform in an orthodox congregation. Isaac Leeser heard him, and commented as follows: "Dr. Wise's style is highly figurative and ornate, perhaps too much so for an English or American audience, but to a German ear accustomed to poetical illustrations he handles his matter delightfully. We may freely say that Dr. Wise has made quite a favourable impression as an orator, and if he would only be a little more energetic, that all could feel the earnestness which compels him to speak, he would no doubt reach a high eminence as a preacher among us, and he is young enough yet (31) to acquire the requisite manner he now lacks."[1]

From Philadelphia he went to Baltimore, where he delivered sermons in three congregations in that

[1] *Occident*, vol. viii., p. 474.

city. One of these, Har Sinai, was a reform congregation. During his stay in Baltimore he delivered lectures for the benefit of the Albany congregation. Having accepted an invitation to return to Philadelphia, he decided to visit Washington for a few days. On this visit he saw Webster, now Secretary of State under President Fillmore. Webster, who had heard from his friends in Albany of Wise's bitter struggle there, asked him if it was a fact that he had remained true to his calling, and when Wise answered him affirmatively, said: "You have more enthusiasm for Judaism than our ministers have for the church. This is worthy of all praise, although it seems to lie in the Jewish blood, as appears clearly from the prophets of old and the Jewish martyrs of all ages. I am able to offer you a number of positions here, but refrain from doing so. Your position appears to me sublime. One spark of enthusiasm is worth more than a whole conflagration of reason."[1] Wise also called on President Fillmore, from whom he learned that his Albany friends had asked the President to appoint him to a position in the library of Congress.

On Wise's return to Philadelphia he delivered a lecture before the Rodef Shalom congregation

[1] *Reminiscences*, p. 185.

on "The Origin of Reform." He was offered the pulpit of this congregation, but declined it on account of the recent events at Albany, which obligated him to remain with the new congregation Anshe Emeth.

Wise's life in Albany from 1851 to 1854 was quiet, happy and serene, and he was able to devote himself to writing and to research work. During the first six months of that year there appeared in the *Occident* five remarkable articles, entitled "Principles of Judaism."[1] These in the main were answers to Leeser's articles under the same title.[2] In these articles Wise lays down the fundamental principles of Judaism from the reform standpoint, and they contain the germs of his future great works on this subject, especially *The Essence of Judaism*, which was revised in 1872 under the title *Judaism—Its Doctrines and Duties*. The principal arguments urged against reform were three: (1) That the Bible forbids every reform; (2) That the prophets teach bodily resurrection and the coming of a personal Messiah; and (3) That every Jew to be a Jew was bound to believe these dogmas. Wise answers these arguments:

[1] *Occident*, vol. viii., pp. 492, 541; *ibid.*, vol. ix., pp. 19, 187, 298.

[2] *Ibid.*, vol. viii., pp. 265, 325, 393, 433, 481, 529.

"If the expounders of the Bible teach doctrines incompatible with the laws of nature which are the works of One Eternal God, or to the experience of history, which is the realized will of the same benign Providence, I am bound to reject them in order not to be forced to doubt the authenticity of the Bible, or to suppose that Infinite Wisdom contradicts itself in the Bible, nature and history. I consider everything which is of human origin liable to mistakes. And though I have found many doctrines and opinions in the works of antiquity to which I am opposed, I nevertheless venerate these incomparable treasures for their great value as a whole. But when the Talmud comes into conflict with the facts of natural philosophy, or with events as expressed in history, and their natural results, I am fearless on the side of truth, hence when the Talmud imposes upon us doctrines or observances of ceremonies which are foreign to the Bible and which infected us for many centuries with the spirit of intolerance and separation, which degraded religion into a compendium of blind and insignificant rites, which depressed the youthful spirit of Judaism and drove thousands from our community, or when the Talmud comes into conflict with the demands of our age, which, if listened to, will

bring distraction and ruin in its train, then I am fearless on the side of reform; and if thousands of learned or not learned doctors say 'The Talmud is Divine' I must a thousand times pity them that they do not look deeper into the matter, or that they lack the moral courage to speak the truth."

In the February, 1851, *Occident*[1] he continues the argument and lays down the four leading ideas of Judaism: "Judaism is based on four leading ideas, and has therefore four principles with which all doctrines, dogmas, maxims, ceremonies, and observances must correspond as consequences with their respective causes, otherwise must be rejected as anti-Jewish and foreign to our system. These four are: (1) One God; (2) Man the image of God; (3) Man accountable to God; (4) God has chosen Israel to promulgate these divine and sublime truths to mankind at large. These four truths are plainly announced in the Pentateuch, re-echoed by the Psalmist and by each of the Prophets. Nature and history do not contradict them, but they are the living witnesses, they bear the strongest evidence to verity of all these four dogmas, and every Jew believes them and defends them with his life, liberty, and property; and if he

[1] Vol. viii., p. 541.

ceases to do so he has ceased to be a Jew. I shall not enter upon philosophical evidences to prove the correctness of these main dogmas. [Here is appended a note: "I have done so in a large work which lies completely finished on my desk, the want of pecuniary means and the efforts of my opponents to decry me as a base denier of our faith have prevented me from publishing it. Better times will come and with them the means to publish my manuscript."] I shall only take under consideration the consequences of these principles. The consequences of the first are of immense importance. There is not only no religion without God, but also no moral law, no virtue, no real humanity, no hope, no real existence. If this universe has no moral government then there is no reason for man to submit to the government of laws; and morality and virtue are nothing but the selfish invention of selfish man to suit his convenience, to satisfy his vain imagination to the detriment of the freedom of all others. Our views of right and wrong, about morality and immorality, about virtue and vice, are altogether derived from our views with regard to God, wherefore it is by no means a matter of indifference what one thinks relative to God. Our doctrines about God, as the Bible gives them, are therefore the best,

because they are the truest and the most sublime and the best foundation for religion and morality. The Islam, no less than Christianity, could not avoid adopting our doctrines, and what they added to them only disfigures the perfect and exalted ideas of the Bible."

In the third article[1] he writes concerning immortality: "The soul of man is immortal and can exist and does exist with the body, but the body of man is subject to mortality and cannot exist in its proper functions without the soul. The dogma of immortality of the body is not biblical, but Talmudical." Wise then states that there can be no bodily resurrection because there is no room, the number of inhabitants constantly increasing. On this article the editor of the *Occident* commented as follows: "We do not know that in our editorial career we have given publication to an article with more pain and unwillingness than in laying the above letter 'On the Resurrection' before our readers. Dr. Wise speaks out plainly enough that he does not believe in it, and that he is satisfied with the philosophical immortality of the soul as all-sufficient in Judaism."

The fifth and last article was printed in the July, 1851, *Occident*.[2] He writes: "Doctrines

[1] *Occident*, vol. ix., April, 1851. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 298.

which are opposed by sound common sense, by the very facts of nature, by the Bible itself, aroused the suspicion of rational men, and they rejected not doctrines alone but the whole systems of which they form a part, made hundreds of indifferent spectators to our sacred cause, caused others to overthrow the whole structure of Judaism. The time of a blind and uninquiring faith is gone indeed now with rational and reasoning men. Lay your hand on your heart, be calm and honest, and ask yourselves whether you can justify your cause before God, if coming generations of Israel will be lost to our sacred cause, because you imposed on them doctrines which caused them to reject the whole system? I could not. Or do you think a generation grown up in a free and enlightened country will not do so? I do not, and therefore I think it my sacred mission to teach an enlightened and pure Judaism to remove as much mysticism as possible from the system of our faith; to give as much rational evidence for it as I can bring forward, and if I am wrong I am honest, and God will not judge me too severely. But as for man, none is my judge in a case in which I have to plead but before God, nor will their fanatical endeavour frighten or hinder me in the least. And so I abandon the dispute, and I hope my name

will be mentioned no longer in American Jewish journals, nor will I reply to any charge brought against me. I shall henceforth pursue my way without journals. I can easily forgive you (editor of the *Occident*) for the injuries you have done me, and I pity you, and I hope the day is not far distant when the *Occident* will advocate the doctrines of reform. I will remain an honest friend of Isaac Leeser, but with the editor of the *Occident* I am done. Wherefore I bid a hearty farewell to the reader."

The editor of the *Occident* prints the following note to this article: "We acknowledge boldly that we meant to convey the idea that those who deny the two doctrines (the coming of a personal Messiah and the bodily resurrection of the dead) in question are not fit to be Jewish ministers, and why? Because they have no right to employ the Prayer Book and read the Scriptures to the people in a sense different from what the ostensible words seem to convey. It is not necessary to follow Dr. Wise step by step. But we may say that we do not insinuate that our epistle has caused Dr. Wise to retract. We only wish that he had done so and thus aided us to heal the breach which German reformers have produced in four congregations in this country." (Charleston, New York, Baltimore, and Albany.)

Thereafter Wise did not write for the *Occident*, but that paper continued to print accounts of his many activities. During the winter of 1851, undisturbed in his rabbinical duties, he was able to devote much time to the study of the history and philosophy of the Middle Ages and at that time had determined to write a history of the Middle Ages.

During the last week of June, 1851, Wise officiated as chaplain in the New York State Senate. He was the second Jew in the United States to open a legislative body with prayer. The first was the Rev. Mr. Eckman, of Richmond, Virginia, who officiated as chaplain in the Virginia legislature in 1850. Dr. Wise's first prayer is worthy of being reproduced as a model of brevity and good taste, and is evidence of his intense Americanism and patriotism[1]:

"Lord of Hosts, Rock of Salvation, whose unlimited power, wisdom, and love are revealed in the innumerable millions of creatures that populate the universe, whose providence, special care, and benignity is revealed in every page of the history of nations, hear our supplications, listen graciously to our petitions that we offer up unto Thee in behalf of our beloved country and her faithful

[1] *Asmonean*, vol. iv., No. 12, July 9, 1851.

legislators who have assembled again to give us laws and regulations to the promotion of liberty, prosperity, justice, and humanity. O Lord, Thou who hast inspired and assisted our ancestors when they arose lion-hearted against their oppressors and bought for the warm blood of their hearts the liberty and independence of these United States. Inspire, our Father, O, inspire our legislature with the same spirit of truth and justice, with the same love of liberty and independence, with the same desire to promote happiness and prosperity among these fellow citizens; remove prejudice, partiality, and factional endeavours from every mind; give unto them the same spirit as the venerable fathers of this republic manifested, let them be freely united in the discharge of the sacred duty to their country that she may bloom and prosper before Thee; that she may be an example of liberty, equity, and humanity; that she may be imitated by those nations that still suffer and sigh under the iron rod of despotism; that her citizens be united before Thee to do Thy sacred will, to proclaim Thy holy name. Blessed be the name of the Lord from sunrise to sunset, from now to evermore. Amen."

In the meantime the new congregation, the fourth in number of reform congregations, but

the first as far as activity on behalf of reform was concerned, was prospering. Its membership steadily increased, and in the summer of 1851 steps were taken to purchase the Baptist Church located on South Pearl Street, at the head of Herkimer Street. It was the clergyman of this church who, in 1847, spoke so fanatically against the Jews and Judaism.

The congregation thus came into possession of one of the largest churches in the city of Albany, containing seats for nearly a thousand persons. It was well furnished, had an organ and family pews, schoolrooms and vestry room. During the remodelling it was decided to introduce another important reform, the first of its kind in the United States,[1] namely, the retention of the family pews where men and women could sit together. This innovation was soon adopted by all Jewish reform and many conservative congregations in this country. This important step was severely condemned. Heretofore the Jewish woman had been treated almost as a stranger in the synagogue, she had been excluded from all participation in congregational life. Today she is the mainstay of

[1] In Germany in Reform Synagogues, although the women's gallery no longer exists, the men and women occupy separate pews.

religious and congregational life of the Jews, and her emancipation was begun in Albany when Wise formed his choir of boys and girls, and her influence increased when she was permitted to worship, on an equality with her father, husband, and brother. The formal dedication of the new synagogue took place October 3, 1851. The state and city officials attended. Rev. Dr. Max Lilienthal delivered an oration in German, and Dr. Wise spoke in English, his text being, Psalm 84, 1–5. In his *Reminiscences* he writes as follows[1]:

"It was a day of ecstatic enthusiasm for us, an hour of atonement and heartfelt rapprochement between the Jews and the most cultured non-Jews of the city of Albany. It was perhaps the first time in America that progressive Judaism had had an opportunity to speak forth its doctrines in earnest fiery words which were reproduced a hundredfold and spread broadcast. The temple became the centre for all Jews and all liberal non-Jews. Naturally the jubilation among the temple people was inexpressible at their scarcely credible success after but one year's existence."

Shortly after the dedication came the great

[1] *Reminiscences*, pp. 210–214.

holiday, the Day of Atonement. "The difference," writes Dr. Wise, "between the two days in the years 1850 and 1851 was so great that I spoke on the evening of Yom Kippur before God and the congregation in so inspired and inspiring a manner that I have never succeeded in equalling it since. I saw God's favour revealed in peace, joy, progress, and enthusiasm, and I thanked and praised him from the depth of my soul. I tried to write down the sermon on the following day, but I did not succeed. The enthusiasm born of the moment cannot be committed to paper later. I could retain the shadow only, the spirit had flown."

The new congregation continued to worship in this temple for nearly thirty-five years. In 1875 it was enlarged. Soon thereafter the enlarged temple became inadequate, and the building of a new temple was agitated. In 1884 the congregation Beth El was without a minister and a movement to unite the two congregations was successful. On December 1, 1885, the new congregation, Beth Emeth, was incorporated, and on May 23, 1889, the present handsome temple on Lancaster, Severn, and Jay streets was dedicated.

Rabbi Wise, then in his seventy-first year, took part in the ceremonies. Almost forty years

before he was the rock upon which the two congregations had split, and it must undoubtedly have been a great satisfaction to him to take part in the reunion.

CHAPTER IX

LAST YEARS IN ALBANY—FIRST EDITORIAL WORK—A HISTORY OF THE ISRAELITISH NATION

TOWARD the close of the year 1851, Wise began to take an active interest in public affairs. His patriotism was aroused by the revolutions of 1848, but soon thereafter he was disappointed because of their failure. In 1851, Louis Kossuth came to this country to secure assistance for his oppressed fellow countrymen of Hungary, and Wise became the secretary of the Albany Kossuth Society. When he delivered a public lecture on Kossuth's politics he was "received with thundering applause." He had been advised that it was highly improper for him as a minister to discuss political topics and therefore he prefaced his lecture with the following remarks: "Had I the eloquence of Demosthenes, of Cicero, of Kossuth, the power of Cæsar, of Napoleon, of Francis Joseph, had I the wealth of Crœsus, of the Rothschilds, I would gladly devote them to the cause which Louis Kos-

suth pleads before us, for it is the liberty of Hungary, of Italy, of Germany, of Europe, of the whole globe, and liberty is the germ of morals, the mother of revealed religion, the muse of virtue, the requisite of prosperity, the fairest and loveliest daughter of heaven."[1]

In 1851–52 the treatment of the Jews in Switzerland and especially in the Catholic cantons called forth a vigorous protest from Wise, and in the issue of the *Asmonean*, May 28, 1852,[2] appears "A call to the American Israelites" to take united action and to request Congress to interfere in behalf of the oppressed Jews. This "call" is interesting as showing Wise's organizing ability, and is likewise the first of his many efforts upon behalf of the oppressed Jews in foreign lands. He calls on all the Jews to meet in their respective synagogues to appoint delegates to meet in New York to prepare a suitable petition to be presented to "Congress, requesting our government to protest against the illegal, inhuman, and degrading laws which have been thrust upon our brethren. Let everyone exert himself to have it (petition) signed by as many of our fellow citizens of other creeds who feel kindly disposed toward an oppressed and suffering people. Congress will regard the prayer

[1] *Asmonean*, vol. v., Dec. 19, 1851. [2] Vol. vi., No. 6.

of the hundreds of thousands of faithful citizens and the powerful word of our government will check the enemies of Israel. The congregations who cannot send delegates to New York should appoint residents in New York to represent them. Hold meetings and report immediately to the public press and let us come before Congress before the close of the present session." Five years later Wise took a prominent part in protesting against the laws of certain cantons which discriminated against the American Jews. This will be considered in a subsequent chapter.

Wise had written in the *Occident*, July, 1851,[1] "I shall henceforth pursue my way without journals." But his nature was such that he could not refrain from appearing in public print. Within a year he published his views on the Swiss question and in September, 1852, he was invited to take charge of "The Theological and Philosophical Department of the *Asmonean*." In the issue of September 10, 1852,[2] appears the following announcement: "According to an agreement made between the editor of the *Asmonean* and my humble self, I have taken charge of the theological and philosophical department of this paper, and I deem it my duty to inform the public of the

[1] Vol. ix., pp. 303-304. [2] Vol. vi., No. 21.

leading principles which will guide me in my task.

"Judaism has to struggle against two adversaries, viz., Ignorance and Prejudice. The Jew who is ignorant of the principles and doctrines of Judaism and its history cannot be a pious Jew. The non-Jew who does not possess a correct knowledge of our religion is our fiercest opponent. It will be my endeavour in the first place to promulgate correct information on Jewish learning. I shall attempt to remove the veil from the source of Jewish literature and to open the fountains of our history so that its pure waters may spout forth and satisfy the calm and reasoning readers. I am a republican and consequently an independent man, and acknowledge every man's right to his own opinion, and I am not vexed if my views are gainsaid by others, wherefore I shall utter truth boldly and only notice arguments of opponents for refutation. Especial care will be bestowed upon the history of our nation about which the German Jews have written so much and so well."

The editor of the *Asmonean* says in this same number: "The liberal sentiments of Dr. Wise and his open, fearless method of discussing questions having placed him in the front rank of reformers, it becomes necessary to say and repeat in order

that there should be no misunderstanding on this point that Dr. Wise's position will not interfere with the management or control of the paper. It will still continue 'open to all and influenced by none.'" Wise had now obtained what he had long wished for, "an organ" in which he could freely express his views and answer his opponents.

During the eighteen months that he was connected with the *Asmonean* he contributed many scholarly articles. It was Wise's habit now, as well as later, to write articles which could be published in book form afterwards. Among the longer essays printed were *The Bath Qol*, included later in his *Origin of Christianity*, a biography of the first Hillel as the precursor of Jesus, and the Jewish Constitution based upon the Code of Maimonides. There were also translations from learned German publicists, *e. g.*, "The Chapter on the Book of Chronicles," in Zunz's *Gottesdienstliche vortraege der Juden*, Geiger's *Divan des Jehuda Halevi*, Frankel's *der Gerichtliche Beweis*, and translations of the various writings of Rappaport, Luzzatto, Krochmal, Holdheim, Jost, and Graetz. There also appeared almost every week a rabbinical legend from the Talmud or Midrash, translated from the original. A department of foreign news was likewise instituted by him.

In his article, "The American Synagogue as It Is,"[1] he points out that the chief fault is the lack of educated ministers and teachers, which can be remedied by securing better educated preachers: "The preacher must know and master the whole of the Hebrew literature, both biblical and Talmudical, for he must be thoroughly versed in the religion he expounds. To such congregations who do not feel able or inclined to pay the salary to those men (rabbi and cantor), but still wish to have a competent minister who instructs in the synagogue and in the school, we have to offer the following plan: Abolish all sorts of singing and chanting in so far as the minister is connected with it and let him read only the prayers and the weekly section of the Bible without making himself ridiculous by peculiar and antiquated chanting and singing. This is a change to which none can offer any material objection, for in our day none is superstitious enough to think that God will be less pleased or the heart of the worshipper less edified if antiquated tunes are abolished. If the service is too long so that one cannot read the whole of it and deliver his sermon, then shorten it, omit such prayers as Piutim, which are of later origin. In shortening your service you will derive

[1] *Asmonean*, vol. vi., No. 25, 1852.

the following benefits: (*a*) That one minister can read the service and preach without fatigue, and you save the expense of paying two salaries; (*b*) You will not be fatigued and worried in the house of the Lord by a service which lasts two to three hours; (*c*) You will be able to maintain a proper decorum in the synagogue. The most of the congregations are desirous of employing a minister who can preach in the English language, and this is both laudatory and praiseworthy. We hate exclusiveness and separateness; we are none of those partisans who wish to maintain the German element or any sectional element in this country; the German governments especially have not treated either us or our forefathers so very amicably that we should feel so much inclined to remain Germans, or educate our children as patriotic Germans; we are disposed to fraternize with a nation which first offered a brotherly hand to persecuted Israelites, and this nation, America, uses the English language, therefore we invariably endeavour to speak English at home, in our schools, and in our synagogues. We feel no regret in abandoning a language in which we heard and felt the terms *Judenhass* and *Judenverfolgung* and *Judenverachtung* (hatred, persecution, and contempt of the Jews) for the language of a nation

whose dictionary is not polluted by such low terms. In this case we again believe we give utterance to the voice of the people, for it is generally noticed at the end of advertisements 'None need apply who is not a thorough English scholar.'"

In the *Asmonean* of October 22, 1852,[1] he writes on "Congregational Schools," and the following quotations show his intense Americanism and patriotism: "If anything like sectarian religion is taught in the public schools the Israelites should complain and the school board is bound in duty to hear and redress the wrong. As citizens we must not be distinct from the rest, in religion only are we Jews, and in all other respects we are American citizens. And therefore we must have religious schools in which the Hebrew language, Bible catechism, etc., is taught by competent teachers, but do not entirely withdraw your children from the public schools."

The following, taken from an article on the "Parties in Israel,"[2] is interesting as throwing light on his reform views: "On the whole it ought to be said the American Jews are divided into ultra-orthodox and reform congregations; the latter of which are the most numerous. The parties do

[1] Vol. vi., No. 27.
[2] *Asmonean*, vol. vi., Dec. 10, 1852.

not understand each other because their leaders have not the moral courage to enter upon the calm and honourable discussion of the leading principles. Reforms go slowly because the leaders are not as sincere as it behooves them to be, and each desires to be greatest without doing much for it. The future would bring better results if those who now stand at the head of the parties would be devoted enough to cast off their private feelings and become more active and attempt more earnestly to reconcile the parties and to forward the cause of Israel." Answering the question, "What ought to be done?" he says: 'The whole divine worship must be improved, the antiquated chants must be abolished, the young must be instructed in the principles of Judaism. The living word must be restored to the temple of Israel by the people engaging able, pious, and moral preachers.' And if our readers ask what else must be done, we would tell them that those who cry out at noonday 'Come, let us have midnight' are the false prophets of our day and must be silenced, and those who believe or are attempting to make others believe that the Jewish citizens of this country will creep back into narrow Jewry, wear a long beard, veil the face and cover the hair of his wife, make the school a place of

torture, the synagogue a place of ridicule, are mightily mistaken. That time has gone, and happily will return no more. We demand now the respect of society for us and our institutions; we claim the regard of the community for our religion; we have an unrestrained intercourse with the world, and therefore we must act accordingly. Everything that is not in accord with the natural laws of morality and justice must be shunned. Our religion and institutions must be defended by competent orators and sound publications, a course more than all others that will secure the respect of the nation of which we are citizens and also instruct and inspire our sons and daughters with veneration and love for Judaism."

To assure the future of Judaism, he writes in December 31, 1852, issue of the *Asmonean:* "It is necessary for the congregation to have a minister grounded in ancient and modern literature capable of expounding Judaism; good schools for the young, and colleges where Jewish literature is taught and where ministers and teachers, as well as laymen, may be educated, and societies should be organized in every city for the purpose of establishing libraries."

In the January 28, 1853, *Asmonean*, under the head, "The Necessity for a Collegiate Institution,"

Wise again advances potent arguments. He points out the ignorance of Jewish literature and history among the American Jews: "Therefore we cannot be silent," he says, "when we see such a horrible grave dug for Judaism which is much dearer to us than all the favour of all the communities in the world. If we are right in our views then a horrible wrong is being perpetrated upon the rising generation, if no provision be made to remedy this evil. We are upon a fair way to reduce Judaism in America to a mere shadow, and the synagogue to a ridiculous imitation of what it should be; endeavours ought to be made to prevent such a state of affairs. We deem it our sacred duty to call upon every sensible Israelite to consider this matter and to try that means be devised to meet this evil. We earnestly call upon our friends in every city of the Union to consider the present position of things and to reflect what it will be in twenty years or ten years hence; where will they obtain their teachers and preachers? Now they are dependent on Germany and Poland. Is such a dependence to continue, and if it continues will the crop be unfailing?"

In the spring of 1853 Isaac Leeser published an article in the *Occident* calling for a conference of Israelitish Clergy. Wise opposed such a gather-

ing. In the April 28, 1853 *Asmonean*, he wrote that it was necessary to have ministers before you could have a conference of ministers. "The conference might have the effect of instituting an ecclesiastical authority of one or more men. That is exactly the thing we hate to see or have proposed under existing circumstances."

Wise continued to write for the *Asmonean* until his departure for Cincinnati in April, 1854. Besides his literary and historical articles of which mention has been made, he wrote articles in which he dwelt upon the necessity for a college for the education of the Jewish youth. On August 19, 1853, the *Asmonean* printed an article, "Plan for a Hebrew College." Although it was twenty years before his cherished plans and hopes were realized, it is remarkable with what detail he had worked out the scheme in 1853.

"Such a college," he writes, "must be located in the city which is in possession of good libraries, hence where a good university, or college, or academy exists, so that the students by an arrangement with the directors are enabled to study there all the branches of mathematics, physical sciences, and the general branches of *belles lettres*, the commercial sciences, and the classical studies. All the remaining professorships would be these:

(1) One for the Bible, its commentaries and Hebrew languages; (2) One for the Mishna, Talmud and Aramaic languages; (3) One for history of the Israelitish people and its literature; (4) One for rhetoric, logic, and moral and mental philosophy; (5) One for Pedagogics, etc. More than five or six professors would not be required for the commencement."

His optimism is seen in the statement that the necessary money for the building and the library could be raised very easily. "It admits of no rational doubt that the matter could be carried into effect if co-operation of all influential men could be obtained. Will not some of our friends interest themselves on the subject and take the measure into their hands? We promise our hearty co-operation, we will strain all our feeble nerves in obtaining support for the institution. We would even undertake to travel and see the principal congregations of this country on the subject if the desirable end could be reached." This latter he did, but the story of the founding of the college must be reserved for a later chapter.

THE HISTORY OF THE ISRAELITISH NATION

With the organization of the reform congregation, Anshe Emeth, Wise was able to devote more

time to study. He had always felt that the Jews of America should do some productive work, and after he ceased writing for the *Occident* in July, 1851, he devoted nearly all his time to a work that was published early in 1854, under the title, *The History of the Israelitish Nation from Abraham to the Present Time—Derived from Original Sources*, Vol. I.

This first volume closed with the destruction of the first temple at Jerusalem. He had intended at first to write a history of the Middle Ages, but yielding to the solicitation of his friends he consented to write a history of the Jewish people. During the ensuing two years he worked steadily, and at the same time wrote for the *Asmonean*, and was busily occupied in the upbuilding of his new congregation. After completing the first volume he wrote an introduction in which his views were clearly set forth. In this introduction he unequivocally stated that miracles do not belong to history, and explained them as natural events. Jewish history was likewise written from a democratic standpoint. "In this," he says,[1] "I differ from all my predecessors, hence the monarchy was unjustified and contrary to the laws of Moses. If this were true the Messianic

[1] *Reminiscences*, pp. 230–231.

belief of both Jews and Christians was without foundation, therefore I had no reason to palliate the faults and weaknesses of David, Solomon, and the whole dynasty. I exposed all the intrigues of the court, and pinned my faith to the prophets who had thundered against the kingdoms and the kings. Today the book is orthodox in very truth as Theodore Parker asserted at that time; but at the time of its appearance (1854), it fell into the orthodox camps like a veritable bomb." This book contains a preface of ten pages, an introduction of nine pages, and five hundred and sixty octavo pages, divided into five periods of thirteen chapters. The main body of the book contains the political history, and the appendix of every period contains the doctrines, principles, customs, and literary activity of that particular age. The periods are, first, From the Birth of Abraham to the Demise of Moses, three chapters; second, From Joshua to the End of the Republic in the Time of Samuel, three chapters; third, From King Saul to the Division of the Kingdom, three chapters; fourth, From the Division of the Kingdom to the Fall of Samaria, two chapters; and, fifth, From the Fall of Samaria to the Fall of Jerusalem, two chapters. In the preface and introduction are given the names of the works the author con-

sulted in his studies. To appreciate the hostile criticisms with which the book was received by the orthodox it is necessary to quote from the introduction, pages 15–16: "The difficulty which we encountered on the threshold in the writing of this volume is this: The facts preserved in the Scriptures are surrounded by doctrines and miracles, so that it often becomes difficult to say which belongs to the province of history. . . . We have proceeded upon the following principle: History is distinguished from religion and theology as the ideas of knowing and believing. History records what is established by the criterion of criticism to be fact, while the dogmas and doctrines of religion are based upon faith, not admitting of the rigid application of criticism. Rational theology itself cannot proceed beyond a reconciliation of faith and reason. This, however, is insufficient in history, where evidences are required that things actually took place, where, when, and how they occurred.

"The next distinction between history and religion is this, the former treats of man and the latter of God. If this be admitted it must necessarily follow that miracles do not belong to the province of history. Miracles can be wrought by God only, and history records what men have

done. The historian may believe the miracles, but he has no right to incorporate them in history. . . .

"Doctrines are not of themselves a part of history; they are of importance only so far as they exercise an influence upon human actions which became a part of history.

"According to these principles we have adopted only such facts as are able to stand the test of criticism; miracles for which we could not find common and natural reasons were not recorded by us, still we have attempted to find such reasons wherever we could."

This book was the result of long and painful study, and when it was finished in the spring of 1853, Wise took the manuscript to New York in the hope of finding a publisher. Despite letters of recommendation from Horace Greeley and William H. Seward, no publisher was willing to accept the work. Not being able to find a publisher he decided to publish it himself, and he contracted for an edition of two thousand copies. "The contract called for about two thousand dollars more than I possessed. While the book was in press I told my friends of my rash undertaking. The faithful ones who had stood manfully and fraternally by me in all my struggles, my

old guard, did not fail me now."[1] During the summer of 1853, Dr. Wise read the proof of his new work. *The History of the Israelitish Nation* was severely criticized by Jews and Christians. Volumes xi. and xii. of the *Occident*, and ix. and x. of the *Asmonean* contain many communications bitterly condemning the work, and a few praising it. Wise was considered un-Jewish, a heretic, a German rationalist, etc. Although Dr. Wise had been in this country only seven years, the style of the book is very good and shows a remarkable grasp of the English language.

THE CLOSE OF THE ALBANY CAREER

In September, 1853, while Wise was busy with the publication of his first book he received a letter written by Jacob H. Goodhart, secretary *pro tem.* of the congregation Bene Yeshurun of Cincinnati, asking upon what condition he would accept election as rabbi of that congregation. At this time he believed that his mission at Albany had been accomplished. He was also depressed by the lack of support he had received in the East for his cherished desires, a college and a union of Israelites. Besides, he was in debt, and he had a

[1] *Reminiscences*, p. 227.

family of three young children. Another child, a son, Julius, had been born in 1851, and he thought that there were better prospects in the rapidly growing West. From the *Occident* and the *Asmonean* he had heard of the congregational activity in Cincinnati, and especially of the Bene Yeshurun congregation which had been organized by German Jews in 1842, under whose auspices there had been opened a day school in 1849, the Talmud Yelodim Institute, which he hoped would be useful in his efforts to establish a college. Easily gaining the consent of his wife, he decided to go to Cincinnati provided the congregation would accept him on his own terms. In order to avoid the difficulties and the disagreeable conditions that he had encountered during his first years at Albany he determined there should not be a repetition of such awkward situations, and therefore wrote that he would accept an election on the following conditions, viz., that he should be elected unanimously and for life, and without trial sermon; that the salary should be sufficient to make him "independent of any gifts from the rich or poor members," and that he be permitted to enter upon his duties six months after his election. "I dispatched the letter," he writes,[1]

[1] *Reminiscences*, p. 235.

"and thought that if the congregation accepted these conditions, it was sincere in its desire to have me despite my failures, stupidity, and bad reputation."

At the general meeting of the Bene Yeshurun congregation, October 27, 1853, the following resolution was unanimously adopted: "That this congregation elect the Rev. Dr. Isaac M. Wise during good behaviour as our minister and superintendent at a salary of $1,500 per annum." The proposal no less than the acceptance by the congregation were bold steps at that time. Twenty-five years later Dr. Max Lilienthal said in the course of a congratulatory sermon delivered from Dr. Wise's pulpit: "Jacob Goodhart said to me in New York, 'We have engaged the services of the rabbi of Albany for life.' For life! That was a new and decisive word twenty-five years ago. Thanks, a thousand thanks to your noble congregation who first uttered these words, thanks to the rabbi who first insisted on this condition. Ministers were elected but for one year and like politicians had to flatter and humble themselves before every ignoramus who had a right to vote at the annual election. And whenever a man dared to show his self-respect, his superior knowledge, and the will to maintain the dignity of his clerical

office there arose hydra-like contentions and bitter animosities. We, the elder rabbis of this country, can tell the story of our sadder experiences. But the spell was broken when this congregation first of all said, 'I have betrothed thee unto me forever,' and when the rabbi and the congregation repeated the words of the Song of Songs."[1] In his letter of acceptance, Wise wrote: "I am a friend of bold plans and grand schemes, therefore I entertain the hope that the Talmud Yelodim Institute will in a few years realize my fervent wishes for a Hebrew college in which our national literature may flourish alongside of a classical and commercial education."

Wise immediately resigned his position in Albany to take effect in April, 1854, and requested his staunch and loyal friends not to dissuade him from going. They readily acquiesced in his course, for they realized not only the welfare of his family, but the cause of reform Judaism necessitated his acceptance.

In response to many invitations from leading members of the Cincinnati congregation, Wise visited Cincinnati in December, 1853, where he spent three weeks delivering sermons in the several congregations, and addressed the Bene B'rith

[1] *Israelite*, May 2, 1879, vol. xxxii, N. S., No. 18.

Lodge and other benevolent organizations, and on all these occasions he set forth his views on reform, which were well received. This first visit to Cincinnati is delightfully described in his *Reminiscences.*[1] He was fortunate in the friends he made on this trip, for they were a tower of strength to him during his early years in Cincinnati.

"My reception seemed hearty and well meant, and I felt at home at once in the Marcus Fechheimer house. That very day and evening all the prominent members of the congregation visited me and welcomed me heartily. It is difficult to determine at this time (1875) what impression I made upon the people. I was thin, my face was pale, my eyes were deep-set and encircled with blue rings; my hair was long and flowing, my glances were fiery, my lips colourless, my figure bent and insignificant."

On his return to Albany he made the necessary preparations for his removal to Cincinnati in the following April. In January, 1854, a second daughter, his fourth surviving child, Ida, now Mrs. Henry Berheim, of Cincinnati, was born.

During the winter of 1854 when he and his book were being so bitterly attacked he offered to release

[1] Pp. 239–250.

the Cincinnati congregation from its contract, but the offer was refused.

He continued to write weekly for the *Asmonean*, and he published some very instructive and valuable articles. In the first chapter of this book the articles, "Recollections of Bohemia" are reprinted and it is greatly to be regretted that he did not write the sequel, "Recollections of Prague," which undoubtedly would have contained much biographical material.

His attitude towards women is well expressed in an article,[1] "The Confirmation and Barmitzvah." In this he defends the Confirmation which is the ceremony in which both boys and girls participated, whereas only boys took part in the Barmitzvah. "We leave it to the reader to decide whether this reform was right and good, or uncalled for, at the same time we can not restrain ourselves from entering our complaints on behalf of our female friends," he writes. "Is it not an insolence that men say in their morning prayers, 'Blessed art thou, etc., that thou hast not made me a woman.' Is it not an offence to their mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters, and if it should not be said, why should it be printed? [In the Prayer Book.] Is it not a rudeness of the

[1] *Asmonean*, vol. ix., No. 23.

meanest kind that a female is considered as a nobody in respect to person in religious affairs, not only in the synagogue, but in the family circle? This is one of the 'established' absurdities, this is evidently the mildest name we can find for it."[1]

On April 19, 1854, the last day of Passover, Wise delivered his farewell address before the congregation Anshe Emeth. "I will not attempt to describe the scene," he writes in his *Reminiscences.*[2] "It was a day of mourning; I was attached to Albany with all the fibres of my heart. It was my first home in the new world. I had so many true and tried friends in the old city on the Hudson. Every child, every tree was dear to me, but my school-days were over, I had to go out into the world. I had attended two schools in Albany for nearly eight years; the school of experience, of bitter struggles and brilliant triumphs, and the school of learning, whose lessons I had learned with tireless industry. I had no fortune, but I was very rich; I had many warm friends, a wife and four children, much self-reliance, and a firm faith in God and the truth. A dreaming optimist, an idealist such as I always was requires no more than this to be happy." The congregation passed resolutions of appreciation of his ser-

[1] *See infra*, page 363. [2] P. 251.

vices. They were printed in t
March 24, 1854, and also in the

Wise left for Syracuse *en route*
April 20, 1854. His brother-in-la
was to meet him with Mrs. Wise
at Rochester several days later.
the train at Rochester he wrot
Asmonean, dated April 25, which
April 28, 1854, issue. It was his
tribution, as he had severed his
that paper a few weeks before.
writes: "The last sounds of my f
still re-echo in my heart, and if I
utterance to my sentiment I co
touching and beautiful letter.
dear sir, a small space in the *Asm*
my friends in Albany that if my s
will be of any value to the hous
thanks for it are due to the Albani
their faithful attachment and supp
been obliged three years ago to have quit my position and entered upon the legal profession. 'This country congregation,' as Isaac Leeser styled them, consists of men who adhere to the principles which I advocated; they adhered consistently to those principles under all circumstances."

This communication contains an early reference

to the idea of circuit preaching among the Jews. "Why can not we," he writes, "have travelling ministers to preach to such congregations who have no ministers? If we had such Judaism would prosper much more, and congregations could be organized much faster."

His family joined him at Rochester on April 24, 1854, and together they continued their journey westward. "My wife was charmed," he writes,[1] "with the changing scenes through which we passed. I also was in a happy frame of mind, notably when we rolled through the rich and blooming state of Ohio on the 25th. All the peach-, plum-, and cherrry-trees were in full blossom, displaying their pageantry of rich colours in the mild spring sunshine. The fields were full of life and bustle, dotted everywhere with flocks of sheep and playful lambs. It was a charming picture. My children shouted with glee." On April 26, 1854, he arrived in Cincinnati. Of the close of his journey he writes: "The school-days are over; I am entering upon life a second time. A new chapter of my biography is opened; what lies hidden in the lap of the future?"

The following pages will tell the story of that future which was so pre-eminently successful.

[1] *Reminiscences*, pp. 253–254.

During the next forty-six years of his life in Cincinnati he became the leader and dominating spirit in progressive American Judaism; the ablest and most prominent reform rabbi in America, the editor of the most influential Jewish journal in the country, the *Israelite*, later the *American Israelite*, and of the *Die Deborah*, a German weekly, the organizer of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the founder and first president of the Hebrew Union College and of the Central Conference of American Rabbis.

CHAPTER X

THE RABBI OF CONGREGATION BENE YESHURUN

On April 26, 1854, Isaac Mayer Wise arrived in Cincinnati, and during the next forty-six years his entire life was devoted to the cause of Judaism in America.

This successful career covering the last half of the nineteenth century can be appreciated best if his many-sided activities are considered separately. Naturally they overlap and are so interwoven one with the other that it will be difficult to portray any one without reference to the others. However, a clear insight into his power, force, and influence can be had by setting forth in greater detail each phase of his activity, that of rabbi of the congregation 'Bene Yeshurun, editor of the *American Israelite*, founder of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the Hebrew Union College, and the Central Conference of American Rabbis.

In 1854, Cincinnati had a population of about 155,000 of whom four thousand were Jews. The

first Jew settled in Cincinnati in the first week of March, 1817. He was a native of Plymouth, England. About the time of his arrival another Jew from Portsmouth, England, settled at Connersville, Indiana. Other English Jews settled in Cincinnati between 1820 and 1830, and during the same period some Dutch and French Jews arrived.

About 1830 the Polish and German Jewish immigration began, and within a decade the English Jews were outnumbered by the Germans, who continued to arrive in large numbers during the succeeding decades. In the fall of 1819 the English Jews in Cincinnati held the first Jewish services in the West, and on January 4, 1824, a meeting of the resident Jews of Cincinnati was held at the home of Morris Moses when steps were taken to organize a congregation, and on the 18th day of January, 1824, the congregation Bene Israel (Children of Israel) was organized "According to the form and mode of worship of the Polish-German Jews." Between 1838 and 1840 there were in and about Cincinnati a number of young, energetic German Jews who were not in sympathy with the English congregation Bene Israel. During the year 1840 they met and decided to organize an independent congregation which they named Bene Yeshurun (Children of Yeshurun). Their



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first place of worship was in a residence on Third Street between Sycamore and Broadway; and on February 28, 1842, they received a charter from the State. The history of this congregation during its early years was similar to that of many other German Jewish organizations at that time. Frequent meetings were held, but the business transacted was of minor importance. The congregation soon increased in numbers, and in 1844 decided to build a synagogue, and the following year purchased for that purpose a lot on Lodge Street, a small narrow street, practically an alley. In 1845 the congregation refused to unite with congregation Bene Israel. The corner-stone of the new synagogue was laid in 1846, and in 1847 the congregation elected the Rev. James K. Gutheim, lecturer and reader, at a salary of $500 per annum. The congregation became more active after the arrival of Rev. Mr. Gutheim. He introduced some reforms, among which was the establishment of a choir. In 1848 he asked the board of trustees to appoint a committee to prepare a permanent ritual or order of worship. The committee was appointed and submitted a report prepared by Rev. Mr. Gutheim, recommending the adoption of new rules relating to decorum during the services, and the omission of certain portions of the Prayer

Book. As the board of trustees could not agree with the committee, the report was referred to the general meeting of the congregation which adopted part of the report.

The new synagogue was dedicated on September 22, 1848. At this time the congregation had 134 members. Soon after the dedication the ultra-orthodox members of the congregation began to oppose Rev. Mr. Gutheim because of his reform tendencies, and in 1849 he resigned and was succeeded by Rev. Mr. H. A. Henry, an Englishman. Mr. Henry was strictly orthodox in his views, and through his influence the reform movement began by Gutheim received a serious setback. Rev. Mr. Henry was a scholar and a writer and he introduced the custom of preaching every Sabbath and on holidays. In September, 1850, he was re-elected at a salary of $800 per annum, but resigned the following July. On October 4, 1851, Rev. A. Rosenfeld of the orthodox Portuguese congregation of Charleston, S. C., was elected cantor, lecturer, and superintendent of the school at a salary of $1000. He was a fluent preacher, a good cantor, and an able teacher, but was strictly orthodox. In 1852 he was re-elected for three years at a salary of $1500. About this time he was bitterly attacked, not only by the

members of his own congregation, but by the members of congregation Bene Israel, and ridiculous charges against him were published in the *Occident*. Notwithstanding the confidence expressed in him by his own congregation he resigned in 1853.

Many of the leading members of the congregation visited New York frequently, and while there they heard of Rabbi Wise of Albany; others had read of him in the *Occident*. Isaac Leeser, the editor of the *Occident*, visited Cincinnati, and in the April number of 1852, published a report of his visit. In the issue of June, 1852, there is a communication from Cincinnati written by Henry Mack, a prominent member of the congregation, from which it appears that at this time there were four congregations in Cincinnati: Congregation Bene Israel, consisting of one hundred and seventy members; Congregation Bene Yeshurun, one hundred and eighty members; Congregation of Brotherly Love, eighty members, and a newly organized Polish congregation.

Mr. Mack in his communication gives a good description of the work of the Talmud Yelodim Institute, a day-school which was organized at his suggestion by the Bene Yeshurun congregation in 1849: "That Talmud Yelodim Institute bids

fair to become one of the best schools in the country," he writes. "We employ at present three male and a female teacher, all able instructors and classical scholars, who teach all branches belonging to a thorough English education. German and Hebrew languages, religious and vocal music. We are the only congregation in this city in whose synagogue sermons in the vernacular are delivered." In September, 1853, this congregation, notwithstanding its previous orthodox proclivities, invited Dr. Wise, of Albany, the leading reform rabbi in America, to become its minister and superintendent of its school, and in October it unanimously elected him for life at a salary of $1500 per annum.

In his letter dated Albany, October 31, 1853, acknowledging his election, Wise wrote: "Being in possession of your favour of the twenty-eighth instant, I repeat what I have informed you by telegraph, that I accept the office. I shall be in Cincinnati in December as I promised, and will enter upon my duties on the first of May, next. I promise nothing, but shall honestly attempt to give satisfaction to the K. K. Bene Yeshurun and to deserve that unconditional confidence which that honourable body has been pleased to put in me. The intelligence and the pious will for which

your congregation is reputed promise that we shall soon succeed to elevate it to a model congregation for the whole West and South, to maintain and defend the honour of our sacred faith against all religious sects."

Wise arrived in Cincinnati at the end of the following April and immediately took charge of the congregation and the school. The Lodge Street synagogue at that time was without organ and choir, and was quite orthodox. The members observed the first and second days of each holiday, and worshipped with covered heads. There was no confirmation of children, and the ritual was German. During the first year of Wise's occupancy of the pulpit he was the only Jewish preacher in the entire West. His audiences were large and composed of members of the other congregations, and of many visitors from the West and South whom business brought to Cincinnati. Wise was most fortunate in finding so many able, earnest, and willing young men in his congregation who assisted him in his progressive work. Most of the young Germans of Cincinnati came from Bavaria, Württemberg, and Baden, and had been influenced by the reform movement in Germany, and especially by Rabbi Leopold Stein of Burgkunstadt and Frankfort. The president of the con-

gregation at the time of Wise's election was Marcus Fechheimer, a man of education, tact, and force. He realized Wise's ability and aided him in all his undertakings. Within a few weeks after Dr. Wise's arrival the president announced the abolition of the Piutim, the liturgical poems, part of the ritual, and soon thereafter the sale of the Mitzwoth was abolished. Thus two reforms which Wise had introduced in Albany after a struggle were adopted without any effort on his part. The rabbi wished to establish a choir, but owing to the fact that the congregation had spent several hundred dollars in previous years for that purpose without success, this effort on his part was not accomplished so easily. However, he invited many young men and women to assist him, and within a few months a choir was being trained. In March, 1855, the congregation decided to enlarge its seating capacity, build a choir gallery, and install an organ. At first the suggestion of an organ was opposed by the more orthodox, but as the question was decided by so overwhelming a majority this opposition faded away. The renovated synagogue was re-dedicated with appropriate services on August 24, 1855. The choir, with three exceptions, was composed of volunteers. In 1856 two non-Jewish professionals were added

to the choir. This innovation of having Christians take part in the divine service caused a sensation at the time, but today is quite common in all temples.

Wise at this time was the only rabbi in Cincinnati, and his sermons became so popular that the older congregation, Bene Israel, which was without a minister, was losing ground. To prevent a dissolution, the congregation at a general meeting held November 5, 1854, adopted the following resolutions:

"That rabbi of Bene Yeshurun congregation is hereby elected for life rabbi of Bene Israel congregation with the understanding that he is to preach alternately in both synagogues, and to discharge rabbinical functions in both congregations.

"That the Bene Israel congregation proceed at once to build a school, and said rabbi is elected superintendent of this school.

"That the Bene Israel congregation contribute as much as the Bene Yeshurun congregation toward the salary of the rabbi."

Heretofore Bene Israel congregation had been very orthodox, and among its leaders were bitter detractors of Wise. "A committee of fifty came to my house at midnight," he writes,[1] "to apprise

[1] *Reminiscences*, p. 277.

me of the action of the congregation. Joy reigned unconfined. It was a fairly won battle, a victory for the cause of progress in Judaism, for the Bene Israel congregation was looked upon as the mother congregation of Western Jewry, and as the camp of simon pure orthodoxy." However, Wise's congregation would not consent to the proposition, nor was this action at all surprising in the light of its history. Bene Yeshurun had been organized by German Jews who had withdrawn from Bene Israel, which was controlled by English Jews who used the Polish-German Minhag form of worship; whereas the former used the German form; then, again, there had always existed a most jealous rivalry between the two congregations. Ridiculous charges against Rev. Mr. Rosenfeld were preferred by some members of the Bene Israel, and in the *Occident* of April, 1853,[1] there is a letter from Marcus Fechheimer, president of Bene Yeshurun, in which he states: "You must know that ever since our congregation was organized up to the present day there has been a jealous feeling manifested toward us by a certain clique composed of members of Bene Israel. They put all kinds of obstructions in our way, called the congregation by nicknames, and contrived every-

[1] Vol. xi., p. 66.

thing in their power to prevent our advancement. What seemed to provoke them most is that our congregation has always striven to obtain for their pulpit men of learning and oratorical powers and high moral standing."

Happily, Rabbi Wise was able to allay this antagonistic and jealous feeling. While he could not become the regular rabbi of Bene Israel congregation without the consent of his own congregation, nevertheless he performed temporarily all the rabbinical functions and preached there every Saturday afternoon. He continued in this capacity until May, 1855, when with his consent and to his great satisfaction his friend Rev. Dr. Max Lilienthal was elected rabbi of Bene Israel congregation. The congregation presented to Dr. Wise a set of laudatory resolutions, and a handsome silver fruit basket in recognition of his services. With the advent of Rabbi Lilienthal, in June, 1855, began a most remarkable friendship between him and Wise, which was to last until Lilienthal's death in 1882. Never before and never since in the history of American Judaism did two rabbis live in the same city on such a footing. They were associated in every movement for the advancement of the condition of the Jews and Judaism. In 1858 the congregation Adath

Israel of Louisville, Kentucky, without success, requested Wise's congregation to permit him to preach in Louisville once a month. The congregation Bene Yeshurun, though it would not consent to share the services of its rabbi with another congregation, began at once to give him most loyal and enthusiastic support in every reform he advocated, and in all his plans for the advancement of American Judaism, his paper, his college, and his ritual. In September, 1855, the congregation at Wise's suggestion elected two delegates to the Cleveland Rabbinical Conference, called by him for the purpose of forming a union among the Israelites, preparing a uniform ritual, and the establishment of a rabbinical college. One of the results of this conference was the preparation of an American ritual, the Minhag America, the work of Rabbis Wise, Kalisch, and Rothenheim, a committee appointed at the Cleveland conference. In September, 1857, congregation Bene Yeshurun adopted this ritual which was gradually accepted by the majority of reform congregations in the South and West. In 1866 Dr. Wise prepared a second part of this Minhag America which was used for the New Year and Day of Atonement Services. As a part of the service on the Eve of the Day of Atonement, Dr. Wise introduced

a beautiful "Memorial Service" for those members of the congregation who had died during the previous year. This service, though written in English and German, was always read in German. The German version was beautiful, full of sentiment and poetry. The theme, "Immortality of the Soul," always moved the congregation. Wise in all his writings probably never again reached the high note struck in this effort.

It was mainly composed on his way from Albany to Cincinnati, in 1854. In his *Reminiscences*[1] he gives the following account: "At noon I sat down in the corner of the station at Columbus and wrote as follows: 'I am troubled with anxious forebodings, now that I approach my new home which I shall reach in a few hours. I cannot pierce the veil of the future, God wills that I should not. Wherefore this fear? Is it the echo of the past or a magical voice from the future? O, Lord God, Thou alone knowest.' Many of my readers may recognize that the thoughts and feelings entertained by me at this time appear in the introduction to the memorial service, but they do not know that the principal passages were written on the train between Columbus and Cincinnati in April, 1854."

[1] P. 254.

In 1888 and 1890 new rituals for Friday night and Saturday morning were introduced. The important changes consisted in reading a greater portion of the service in English and permitting the congregation to participate more in the service.

In 1894 the Union Prayer Book, the work of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, was adopted, and Wise, free from any jealousy, urged his congregation to be the first to accept this new ritual. The congregation, however, refused to omit the beautiful memorial service (Seelenfeier) on Yom Kippur Eve, which was read in German until 1901, when an acceptable English translation made by the late Bernhard Bettmann was adopted. This English translation, which preserves very well the spirit of the original German, is still used.

The orthodox congregations observe two holidays, the second day being the rabbinical, "Second Holy Day." These were observed because it was thought that when in ancient days the messengers were sent out to notify the people of the date that the message might not have been received in time to celebrate the first day. In modern times the reform rabbis felt no such mistake could be made, as these dates were astronomically fixed, and

therefore advocated the abolition of the second holy day. In October, 1859, congregation Bene Yeshurun abolished the observance of all second holidays with the exception of the second day of New Year, the observance of which was not discontinued until 1873. In that year the orthodox custom of worshipping with covered heads was likewise abolished.

During the years 1854 to 1860 the congregation steadily increased in membership and influence, and it soon became evident that the Lodge Street synagogue was too small, and furthermore that the neighbourhood was not conducive to congregational work. At the annual meeting of 1860 a committee was appointed to investigate the question of building a new temple. But owing to the outbreak of the Civil War nothing was accomplished at that time. In 1863 many of the leading and wealthy members of both Bene Yeshurun and Bene Israel thought it advisable to build a large and handsome temple, the pulpit of which should be occupied by Drs. Wise and Lilienthal, the former to lecture in English and the latter in German. Wise, upon being requested by his congregation to give his opinion of this project, said: "I will not leave congregation Bene Yeshurun. The honour of Judaism in Cincinnati and through-

out the West requires that Bene Yeshurun, hitherto the banner bearer of reform and progress on this side of the Alleghenies, should come out of Lodge Street into the broad daylight of a better locality. Still, if the congregation believes that the time has not yet come for such an enterprise I will patiently wait with you. If some of our wealthy members leave us I will stay with you even if my salary by necessity must be reduced one half." This outspoken and unequivocal stand effectually disposed of the project to establish a "temple congregation."

The congregation shortly thereafter unanimously decided to build a new temple, and at an enthusiastic meeting $40,000 was subscribed, committees were appointed, and in May, 1863, the present site, 132 by 100 feet at the south-east corner of Eighth and Plum streets, was purchased, and three years later, August 24, 1866, the new temple was dedicated with appropriate ceremonies. The total cost of the structure was $263,525. This temple is at present one of the handsomest examples of Moorish architecture in America, and at the time of its dedication was one of the largest Jewish temples in the country.

In 1858 a cantor was elected, and whenever there was a vacancy that office was filled by one

of the congregation's most active members, Mr. Solomon Levi.

In 1866, Wise proposed the introduction of Friday night lectures on religious-philosophical or religious-historical subjects, and in 1867 he began to deliver these lectures, many of which were afterwards published in book form. The most noteworthy of these are, "The Cosmic God," "Judaism and Christianity"—"Their Agreements and Disagreements," "Jesus, The Apostles and Paul," "A Defence of Judaism *versus* Proselytizing Christianity," "The Ethics of Judaism," and "Israel, Its Place in History." In a communication to the New York *Jewish Times*,[1] Dr. Lilienthal, writing of Wise's lectures on Jesus of Nazareth, said: "The lectures will everywhere be listened to with great undivided interest. They are a bold and ingenious movement at the time when the Ecumenical Council tries to lead the whole world back into the times of supernatural wonders and bigoted darkness of the Middle Ages.

"What during the evening I liked best was the applause given by the Christian part of the audience. I sat by the side of the Honourable John (*sic*) —a misprint undoubtedly for Wm. S. Groesbeck,

[1] Vol. IV., No. 45, 1870.

the lawyer who so brilliantly defended Andrew Johnson during the impeachment trial. 'I do not subscribe to all that the doctor says,' he remarked to me, 'I do not believe as he believes. But it is one of the most interesting lectures I have listened to for many years. It is a grand and excellent effort and I wonder why the whole bar does not attend. I shall not miss any one of them. They are an intellectual treat indeed.' . . . Protestant ministers were present, and though, of course, differing from Dr. Wise's opinion, were highly pleased."

This Friday night service with its lecture became a very important institution and the example so successfully inaugurated by Wise was followed by many congregations throughout the country, and today is much in vogue in the small cities. Wise's purpose in introducing this Friday night lecture was twofold: (1) To attract his congregation to the temple in the days when the strict observance of the Sabbath was waning, and thus prevent the introduction of Sunday Services; and, (2) To give instruction in Jewish history and philosophy to the less devout audiences. It was not intended to supplant the sermon which was always delivered at the Sabbath service and on holidays.

Writing of those Friday night lectures in the

Israelite,[1] November 16, 1899, the beginning of his last course of lectures, he says: "There was danger of the Sabbath being forgotten; workingmen and business men could no longer attend services. This was one of the reasons why we in 1865 started and advocated a Sabbath with sermons and an instructive lecture at a convenient hour on Friday evenings primarily for those people who claim not to be in condition to attend divine services on the Sabbath day. This innovation crossed the ocean and was introduced in Berlin, Vienna, and elsewhere, after it had been adopted by a hundred and more congregations in America, and saved the Sabbath in most of them. . . . It is a reassurance that the true Sabbath day will not be forgotten in Israel."

The congregation loyally supported Wise in all his efforts for reform, and in every movement he undertook for the purpose of establishing union, college, and conference. As early as 1848, before Wise came to Cincinnati, the congregation had voted to send delegates to the Philadelphia meeting called by him; in 1855 it sent two delegates to the conference held at Cleveland, and in the same year gave active support to the Zion College[2] project. In 1867 the congregation voted $300

[1] Vol. xlvi., No. 20.

[2] *See infra*, p. 260.

toward the establishment of a rabbinical college, and in 1871 it pledged its support for the establishment of a union; in 1873 the congregation, at the suggestion of its president, M. Loth, invited the sister congregations of Cincinnati to join in a call to all Western and South-western congregations to meet in Cincinnati in July, 1873, to form a union. This effort was successful.

The congregation had always espoused the cause of the education of the young. At a general meeting of the congregation held in December 26, 1848, Henry Mack advocated the necessity of establishing a school for the purpose of educating the young in English as well as in Hebrew and religious subjects, and in 1849 a school called "The Talmud Yelodim Institute" was organized. The school was held in the vestry rooms of the synagogue, and was opened with two teachers. In 1856 the school had increased so rapidly that a separate school building was erected on Lodge Street adjoining the synagogue. This school had good teachers and laudatory reports of the work were printed in the *Occident*. Reference has already been made to Wise's letter of 1853 in which he expressed the hope that the Talmud Yelodim Institute would develop into a Hebrew College. The Institute remained a day-school

of five classes until 1868, when, owing to the excellent public school system of Cincinnati, there was no further need for its existence except as a religious school. In 1868 it became the Sabbath school of the congregation and continued its separate corporate existence under the presidency of Abraham J. Friedlander and Jacob Ottenheimer until 1914. Today it is the largest Jewish Sabbath school in Cincinnati, and instruction is given the Jewish children free of charge, and in the school conducted at the temple none of the pupils are the children of members of the congregation. All their children attend the school in Avondale which was erected in 1904 by the congregation, and which is now known as "Wise Center."

In 1858, after the congregation had refused the request of the Louisville congregation to permit Wise to officiate there once a month, it increased his salary to $2000 per annum. From time to time thereafter his salary was increased, and in 1873 he was receiving $4000 per annum. During the years 1870 to 1873, while Wise was putting forth every effort for the establishment of the union and the college, he was being opposed continually by the Eastern rabbis and the Eastern Jewish papers. In August of that year, despite

the violent and abusive opposition of these rabbis and the Eastern Jewish press, Wise was unanimously elected rabbi of congregation Anshe Chesed of New York for life at an annual salary of $8000 given an insurance policy of $7500, and promised an annuity of $1500 in case of disability. He accepted the offer without consulting his own congregation and immediately tendered his resignation. This action was received with astonishment and consternation. Wise was undoubtedly influenced by the thought that he was being neglected by his own congregation, that the fulfilment of his cherished hopes would be sooner realized in the East. He had been sorely tried by the vicious attacks made upon him by the radical reformers Einhorn and Hirsch and their organs, and thought the best answer to their cowardly attacks was to go into their very midst.[1] In the *Israelite* of August 18, 1873,[2] referring to his election, he wrote: "It is the first time in the annals of Jewish history in America that such an offer has been made to a rabbi. This brings the Minhag America permanently to New York and decides forever the value of all the protests and newspaper quarrels which were spread so profusely during the past two

[1] *See infra*, page 292. [2] Vol. xxi., No. 7.

years." Congregation Bene Yeshurun, however, would not accept his resignation and referred it to a special committee of which his most intimate and loyal friends and supporters were members. This committee consisted of Bernhard Bettmann, chairman, Henry Mack, M. Loth, B. Simon, Sol. Friedman, Sol. Levi, and W. Rosenfeld. The committee reported that it had several interviews with Dr. Wise, who stated that while labouring under erroneous impressions as to the relations existing between himself and the congregation he had accepted a call to New York, and that he regretted that he had done so, but that he had been unable to get a release. The committee recommended that his salary be increased to $6000 per annum and an allowance be made for house rent. This action was unanimously approved, as well as the following resolutions written by B. Bettmann: "We hold that as no congregation has a right to remove from office for a trivial cause a Rabbi who has faithfully and conscientiously performed his duties, so no Rabbi, except for the promotion of a great principle, has a right to leave his congregation so long as it unanimously claims his services, insists upon his continuance in office for life, and provides properly for him and his family." The resolutions, after reciting that

Anshe Chesed had made several efforts to induce Wise to accept a call, succeeded in getting his promise of an acceptance without notice to or consent of his own congregation, read: "Thereby violating the comity which should mark the course of one congregation toward another; and,

"Whereas, we have nevertheless without prejudice and actuated by an earnest desire to do justice to all parties concerned carefully examined all the facts in this case and can sincerely and honestly declare that we should consider the loss of our rabbi a sad bereavement, yet we should not hesitate one moment to sacrifice our personal feelings on the altar of our sacred common cause were we fully convinced that the interests of Judaism or the reverend gentleman, himself, could be promoted by the proposed change; and,

"Whereas, from a full knowledge of all the circumstances we are satisfied that such is not the case, and that on the contrary the departure of Dr. Wise at this time would especially be a great loss and perhaps a permanent injury to the young and rising congregations of the West, many of which sprang into existence through his influence, and almost all of which look upon him as their guide and teacher, demanding a closer proximity to them than this removal would make possible,

and consequently his remaining with his congregation which for nearly a quarter of a century has stood by him as one man, and has invariably and joyfully supported him in his successful endeavours to elevate the cause of Judaism in this country, and may therefore justly claim for itself a little more than ordinary consideration at his hands;

"Be It Therefore Resolved, That reminding the Rev. Dr. Wise of his solemn promise given to us twenty years ago that he would devote the rest of his life to the furtherance of the holy cause of Israel as our rabbi and in our midst, a promise of which under the present circumstances we cannot and will not absolve him, we respectfully but firmly decline to accept his resignation;

"Resolved, That we respectfully and earnestly request Congregation Anshe Chesed to yield for the above reasons what they consider their newly acquired rights to our older and more firmly established ones."[1]

The congregation finally succeeded in inducing Anshe Chesed congregation to release Wise.

This was the only disagreement[2] from 1854 to

[1] *Israelite*, vol. xxi., 14, Oct. 3, 1873.

[2] On September 5, 1863, the Hamilton County Ohio Democratic Convention nominated Rabbi Wise as one of its three candidates for the Ohio State Senate. The Cincinnati *Commercial*, commenting on this nomination, said that it was doubtful whether

1900 between Wise and his congregation, which on every possible occasion showed its appreciation for its beloved rabbi.

In June, 1869, Dr. Wise celebrated his silver wedding, and in honour of that event congratulatory resolutions were adopted and a five thousand dollar mortgage on his country home paid.

In April, 1879, the congregation celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of Dr. Wise's incumbency and presented to the Hebrew Union College his life-size oil portrait, which is today in the Board of Governors' rooms.

His editorial in the *Israelite* on this occasion is a valuable contribution to his biography.

In the April 25, 1879, issue, under the head "Twenty-five Years," he writes[1]:

"It was twenty-five years ago today that the editor of the *American Israelite* preached his

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Rabbi Wise would accept the nomination which was made to attract the Jewish vote. Immediately after the nomination, the Boards of the Congregation and the Sabbath School "politely but emphatically" requested Dr. Wise, as his services to the Congregation were indispensable, to decline the nomination.

In complying with this request Dr. Wise wrote that he was without political aspirations and only an humble citizen. "My sincere attachment to this country and the government is well known . . . God will save the Union, the Constitution, liberty, justice for all without my active co-operation."—Cincinnati *Daily Commercial*, vol. xxiv., Sept. 7 and 11, 1863.

[1] Vol. xxiii., No. 17.

introductory sermon in the Lodge Street synagogue before K. K. B. Y. and numerous outsiders and visitors. What a change has come over American Israel since that time. There was then no Hebrew congregation west of the Mississippi; none west of Cincinnati except St. Louis; none west or north of Chicago except a nucleus of a congregation in Milwaukee; none south of Louisville except New Orleans; none in all the South except Richmond, Va., Charleston, Savannah, and Augusta, Ga. Judaism was limited to the few cities of Albany, Syracuse, Rochester, Buffalo, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore; small congregations in Washington, Boston, New Haven and Hartford, Connecticut; then there were also congregations in Cleveland, Cincinnati, Louisville, St. Louis, Chicago, Milwaukee, New Orleans, with a beginning at Mobile. There was no synagogue and no congregation outside of these cities. . . . With a change of principle in Bene Yeshurun congregation of Cincinnati a new era commenced in the American Judaism—the era of synagogal reform all over the land, with the establishment of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and Hebrew Union College, the second chapter of our history begins.

"What we had personally to do with these epochs

and the intermediate transitions we leave to the future historian and the all-seeing eye of God. We know that about two hundred of our sermons, lectures, and addresses have appeared in print, have been delivered in all parts of the United States between New York and San Francisco, and were circulated in hundreds of public journals as no other rabbi's were in any country. The influence which this may have exercised together with the weekly exertions of the *American Israelite* and the books we have written, we have no means of ascertaining.

"The position of American Israel has changed entirely in the past twenty-five years. The Jewish religion stands now before the enlightened portion of the community as the most intelligent and the most liberal religious system. . . . We are no longer pitied, hunted, or converted by bigoted sectarians; all the new-fangled creeds pass by us unnoticed; atheism, nihilism, and the so-called free religionism make no impression in our ranks; we are as solid a line here and now as we have been in the days of hard-shell orthodoxy; simply because Judaism has been reformed in form and essence as its spirit demands to correspond with the spirit and tastes of this age and this country so that the religious Jew can also be a citizen of a free country, a member of society, and a reasoner

upon the very height of modern thought. This is the field in which we have done some work in the last twenty-five years, because God has given us both the pen and the pulpit, the English language and a boundless enthusiasm and a congregation to back us and support us under all circumstances and to encourage us in all possible ways and manners.

"The last, however, was this: When the Personal God question had been agitated we sided with the philosophical standpoint. Some of our very godly colleagues were aroused against us in the wrath of the righteous. The president of our congregation was rather inclined to orthodoxy in general and it was known that he was orthodox. He happened to be in New York when one of our most prominent opponents (Einhorn) came to him and tried to impress him with the benevolent idea that we ought to be removed from rabbinical office on account of our ungodly theology. He tried rather hard, and the president came home to tell the story (not to us) which had the effect of crowding our place of worship Sabbath after Sabbath with men and women who came merely to make a demonstration (as we were afterwards told). When *The Jewish Times*[1] made the most

[1] A New York weekly.

damaging attacks on us we were most popular at home and abroad. When *The Jewish Messenger*[1] most fiercely decried us as a heretic and innovator, we possessed the unlimited confidence at home and abroad as an enthusiastic defender and expounder of Judaism. Nobody will believe that this was a personal favour on the part of our friends and patrons; it was the spirit of self-reflection, progress, and generosity which nothing could arrest, nothing could turn against him who treasured and cultivated it. It is an acknowledged fact now that the lofty standpoint taken where faith and reason, religion and science do not collide has secured to Judaism the high position which it now occupies in the estimation of the most advanced thinkers of our country, and that the keynotes struck on our part concerning Jesus, the Apostles, and Paul have overcome a vast amount of prejudices and hostile feelings which did exist between Jews and Gentiles. We look upon each other in quite a different light from what we did twenty-five years ago.

"We had no trouble in Cincinnati where most all were our friends, and those few, very few indeed, who were not, did not speak loud enough to be heard.

[1] A New York Weekly.

"With the introduction of the Minhag America we considered the question of synagogue reform closed. We knew very well that all other necessary reforms would follow without trouble, as they actually did, and that there must remain a balance of orthodox people to have things their own way until their children will change it. The Friday evening service and lecture, now an institution all over the country, was at once adopted by many congregations as an antidote against Sunday services on the one hand and as a substitute for Sabbath morning services, which many could not attend, on the other hand. We had little trouble with the orthodox side of the house. Our troubles were abroad and with the reformers. First there was a party which had a peculiar idol, viz., the apotheosis of reform. They made of Judaism a reform and were continually negative. To abolish this and that was religion, to scold the orthodox was called preaching. We had great trouble with that party to convince it that reform is a handmaid and must serve the purpose of elevating Judaism and endearing it to its votaries; that the preacher must be positive, must teach and edify, win and give satisfaction to the yearnings of the heart. Then came hostility to the Hebrew and the Talmud which were bound to

be overcome in behalf of Judaism which must have and preserve its literature or go under in the vast majority of its opponents. Then came the attempt to Germanize the American synagogue, which we could not support as young America would speak English in spite of all theology and the synagogue must be no foreigner in this country. Then came the personal attacks for which we never cared. We looked upon it as funny article. Then came the bitter denunciations of the union and the college schemes, and a dozen other episodes all of which are overcome, thank heaven, and the whole aspect has been changed. This is another and better time than it was twenty-five years ago. The Jew is proud of his history, faith, and position in society. The synagogue is modernized and respected. Judaism is a badge of honour, its teachers, organs, and votaries command attention and respect. Things have changed, and we thank God that we have lived to see it.

"This is a new country. Everything therein is young, energetic, and thriving. This is a free country in which intellectual fruits ripen fast. In a few years when forty or fifty graduates of the Hebrew Union College will stand at the head of the synagogues Judaism will be an American institution, its spirit and influence will be widely felt,

and its future will be different from its past. It will be furnished within and will be prepared in spirit far outside of its own boundaries. It will be perpetually the reformatory element, the harbinger of truth and light, and its votaries will increase by the thousands among the most intelligent portions of the country. The foundation is laid, the house must be built. The artisans are preparing themselves for the rebuilding of Israel's sanctuary on the American soil."

In April, 1889, occurred the seventieth anniversary of Wise's birth, a gala celebration took place in the Plum Street Temple on April 6, under the auspices of that congregation, all the sister congregations and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. On that occasion congratulatory addresses were made by the president of the temple, M. J. Mack, by the children of the children of the Talmud Yelodim Institute, by Rev. David Philipson on behalf of congregation Bene Israel, and Bernhard Bettmann representing the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, which organization presented Dr. Wise with a deed to the property No. 615 Mound Street, purchased for $14,500, and the library of which was furnished by the alumni of Hebrew Union College. In this house Dr. Wise spent the last decade of his life. Julius

Freiberg spoke for the Board of Governors of the Hebrew Union College, Rev. Dr. Israel Aaron on behalf of the alumni of the college, the Hon. James D. Cox, president of the University of Cincinnati, brought greetings from that institution, of whose board of directors Dr. Wise was a member; and Charles S. Levi spoke for the students of the Hebrew Union College. The orator of the day was Rev. Joseph Krauskopf of congregation Keneseth Israel of Philadelphia. Besides these addresses, Dr. Wise received hundreds of telegrams, letters, addresses, and handsome gifts from individuals, congregations, and other organizations throughout the land.

In March, 1899, the Central Conference of American Rabbis held a special session in Cincinnati to commemorate the eightieth birthday of its founder and president. On Tuesday, March 13, 1899, the principal ceremonies were held in the Plum Street Temple. On that occasion the congregation presented Dr. Wise with a bronze bust sculptured by Sir Moses Ezekiel, of Rome, a Cincinnatian, which, after his death, his family presented to the Hebrew Union College; the Talmud Yelodim Institute presented a scroll of laws with silver shield, plates, and ornaments, and a miniature ark; the Conference a gavel of ivory and

gold, and the leading congregations throughout the country gave gifts of silver cups, vases, and illuminated resolutions. On the following night a large banquet was held in honour of the event, and when Wise was called upon, near midnight, to respond he said that he had been guilty of many foolish things in his life, but never of making a speech after eleven o'clock P.M. None present will forget his words of thanks so fervently and eloquently spoken, in which he ventured the prophecy that within a short time the whole world would recognize Judaism and its truth and doctrines and accept them.

Without the encouragement and support of the congregation Bene Yeshurun and its leading members, Wise would never have been able to carry his many plans to a successful conclusion. The liberal policy of the congregation, its willingness at all times to grant him leave of absence to travel throughout the length and breadth of the land in interest of reform, of the Union and the College, and the adoption by the congregation of all measures proposed by Wise made the congregation famous throughout the country.

In 1889 the office of cantor was abolished and that of assistant rabbi created, as the congregation desired to relieve Wise of some of his rabbinical

functions. The first assistant was Rabbi Charles S. Levi, now of Milwaukee, who served until 1898, when the present rabbi, Rev. Dr. Louis Grossmann, was called from Detroit. After the election of an assistant Dr. Wise preached on alternate Saturdays. To the very end he was active, and on the Sabbath morning of the day he was stricken he preached a powerful sermon to a large congregation on the text, "May the Lord Bless Thee and Keep Thee; May the Lord let His Countenance shine upon Thee and be Gracious to Thee; May the Lord lift up His Countenance to Thee and grant Thee Peace."

Wise on every occasion gave due credit to Bene Yeshurun for its work and assistance. In his sermon preached in October, 1893, the fiftieth anniversary of his installation as rabbi, he said[1]: "What we have done, you and I, in these fifty years is now a matter of history, well known to you and need not be repeated here. I feel the necessity, however, to make known to you and all what is not so well known. All the controversies and conflicts through which I have passed, all the mental combats in which I was involved, occurred outside of the congregation, outside of Cincinnati even. In the congregation I have

[1] *Israelite*, vol. xl., No. 17.

lived and worked in profound peace and undisturbed harmony, in mutual respect and the kindest feelings. There are few congregations in the land in which such pleasant relations between the congregation and the minister have been so uniformly sustained so long a time. It seems sometimes that we were made for one another. When I came here you, as a congregation, were twelve years old, I, as a rabbi, eleven years, and so we have lived our best years together."

Isaac Mayer Wise was pre-eminently a rabbi. Notwithstanding his great achievements as an editor and organizer, and an educator, he occupies a niche in the Hall of Fame of great preachers. His first sermon in America, the dedication sermon at New Haven in August, 1846, already impressed his hearers, and in his thirty-first year, in 1850, Isaac Leeser had spoken of him as a great orator and a man who had to be reckoned with. He was master of the German language as well as of the English, and his success in the pulpit was in the main due to his simplicity of speech, his splendid delivery, his logical powers of expression, and above all to the fact that he always took a text for his sermon and his funeral addresses and adhered to it. He was never sensational, and firmly believed that politics had no place in the

pulpit. He never spoke on the fads of the day. Writing in the September 21, 1899, *Israelite*,[1] he says:

"For the benefit of the young preachers we state here that the text of the sermons—we never preach without a text from the Bible—were mostly taken from the Book of Psalms which is inexhaustible in the richest and most sublime treasures in theology and ethics. . . . Speaking to the young men, we would say, never preach a sermon without a text from the Bible, a text containing the theme which you can elaborate. The text is the best proof in support of your argument. A sermon without a text is an argument without a proof."

Judaism, its doctrines and truths, were uppermost in his mind when he preached, and he was always expounding the word of God with vigour and sincerity.

Wise, tested by his own definition of what a rabbi should be, certainly was every inch a rabbi. In the *Israelite* of November 10, 1876,[2] he wrote: "He must first and foremost be a Jew with heart and soul thoroughly and enthusiastically, a man in whom there is no guile; a teacher who never loses his patience, truthful and reliable as a rock,

[1] Vol. xlvi., No. 12. [2] Vol. xxvii., No. 19.

and benevolent as the palm in the wilderness. The audience must be convinced that whatever this man in the pulpit says is certainly true to the best of his knowledge, and that he does as he teaches. This is a man's moral weight, it is the magnet to attract. Men who preach for a salary, live to make money, and see in wealth the object of existence, may be honest, but they are poor preachers, as inefficient as those who preach one thing and do another. . . . A rabbi must be a master of Jewish literature and history or he is a fraud. . . . A rabbi of this age must be a classical and scientific scholar and a pleasant orator, or he is useless to his congregation. . . . The rabbi must speak and preach in the language of the country in which he lives, hence the American rabbi must teach, speak, and preach in English to the young, else they will not understand him. The rabbi must know and feel the wants of his congregation, he must understand old and young, and they must understand him. The rabbi must stand as high, and, if possible, a little higher morally, intellectually, and scholastically than the best of his members; he must be an authority. . . . He must not be made by the office he holds, he must make the office respected and honoured. He must love his office and his congregation and

not the wealth of the individual members thereof. 'For the lips of the priest must guard knowledge and the Law is asked from his mouth for he is a messenger of the Lord of Hosts.'"

When Wise came to Cincinnati, in 1854, to take charge of Bene Yeshurun it was a moderate orthodox congregation of 180 members, worshipping in a small unattractive synagogue located on a narrow street in an unattractive part of the city. The congregation was without choir or organ, used an old style ritual, the services were conducted on alternate Sabbaths in English and German, and a greater portion in Hebrew, two days were observed each holiday, the men of the congregation worshipped with covered heads, and there were no confirmation services. At the time of his death the congregation, now nearly four hundred in number, had adopted all the leading reforms advocated by him. The congregation had one of the handsomest temples in the country, situated in a prominent part of the city, a large choir and fine organ. All vestige of orthodoxy had disappeared. The men worshipped with uncovered heads, the second holiday had been abolished, an American ritual had replaced the German one. The services were conducted in English and the Hebrew portion of the ritual was

greatly abridged, and for many years the confirmation services for which Dr. Wise had prepared a special ritual had been a feature.

From an unknown synagogue through Wise's influence and work Bene Yeshurun became the leading reform temple of the United States which for nearly forty years had been not only what he strove to make it, "a model congregation for the whole West and South," but for the whole country, East as well as West, North as well as South.

CHAPTER XI

THE EDITOR OF THE "ISRAELITE"

THE day of personal journalism has passed, but in the middle of the last century, the personal note in journalism was still heard and editorial writers moulded public opinion. Chief among these in the secular press were Horace Greeley and his *Tribune;* in the cause of humanity, William Lloyd Garrison and his *Liberator;* and later, Godkin and the *Nation*, Dana and the *Sun*, Watterson and the *Courier-Journal*, Raymond and the *New York Times*, Bowles and the *Springfield Republican*, exerted great influence.

In the Jewish religious world Isaac Mayer Wise and his *Israelite* became a great force for the advancement of Reform Judaism. Wise while in Albany had written for Leeser's *Occident*, a monthly published at Philadelphia, and for Lyon's *Asmonean*, a weekly printed in New York. Before leaving Albany, in April, 1854, he had secured promises from his friends to assist him if

he published a paper, and on his way he stopped at Syracuse and Rochester and canvassed those cities for subscribers.

Within a month after his arrival in Cincinnati he was busily engaged in devising ways and means to publish a Jewish weekly. When the *Israelite* was founded in 1854 there was no Jewish journal published west of the Alleghenies, and comparatively few Jews in this section could read English. The desire to make money therefore did not induce Wise, who was without means and had a family dependent upon his small salary, to embark upon so hazardous an enterprise. The only Jewish weekly in English in the country was the *Asmonean* of New York, for which Wise had written. But this paper was not a journal in the true sense of the word. It was a small paper and contained very little, if any, literary matter. The *Occident*, on the other hand, was a monthly, and its columns contained sermons and correspondence from different sections of the country, but it could not be classed as a journal nor as a magazine of any consequence at this time.

Wise in his *Reminiscences*[1] gives the following account of the founding of the *Israelite:*

"As early as the month of May, 1854, I began

[1] Page 251.

to take steps towards establishing a Jewish weekly. I wrote very many letters and received very glowing promises, which, however, were never kept. Contributions of all kinds were promised, but they were never received; yet I went confidently to work and wrote matter which I intended to make use of later. Fortunately I wrote very readily, and possessed rare facility in the use of the English language; hence I could commit to writing very quickly thoughts which may have occupied my mind many days. Writing itself was mere play after I had thought out a theme.

"At the end of May, I began to look for some merciful individual who would be so amiable as to publish a Jewish weekly under my direction; but such a one was not to be found, and I began to admire the good sound sense of all the disciples of Faust and Gutenberg. There was no one among the Jews who had any idea of printing or publishing; therefore I could not expect any one of them to undertake this very risky venture. Christian publishers declared bluntly that a few Jews could not insure the success of any paper. I did not relish the thought of borrowing money so soon after my arrival in Cincinnati, particularly as my debt in Albany was not yet liquidated. I did not

know what to do. Finally I came across a visionary, Dr. Schmidt, the owner of the German evening paper, *The Republican*, and of quite a large printing establishment on Third Street, in the very heart of the business district of Cincinnati. Dr. Schmidt accepted my promise that I would make good all losses at the end of the first year. Steps were now taken to have the *Israelite* appear at the beginning of July. Having given orders that I did not wish to be disturbed, I locked myself in my room from two o'clock in the afternoon till four in the morning, and wrote a prospectus. What should I say to the public, what suppress, was a leading question. I stood before the burning thornbush and struggled with myself. Conviction, conscience, duty, were ranged against policy. I had to decide one way or the other. If I used my talents and my position in a politic way I would soon become rich, and nothing could prevent me from entering upon and pursuing successfully a brilliant career. But if I remained true to my convictions, the bent of my nature, then I must be ready to renounce wealth, honours, recognition, and love; I must be ready to serve the cause for the love of truth. . . . I struggled very hard that night until I reached the following decision: Come what may and how it may, I will

not swerve a hair's breadth from my convictions. Either I will build up a Judaism suited to the age and breathing the atmosphere of American freedom, or I will be buried beneath the ruins of the old Judaism. I do not wish to be rich nor honoured, nor recognized, nor beloved. I will do my duty. I will remain true to my conviction.

"Then I wrote the prospectus—short, concise, clear, and fearless. I promised Judaism a sharp weapon. I promised progress, enlightenment, spiritual striving, a fearless organ. The prospectus was printed, distributed, and mailed by the following afternoon."

"PROSPECTUS OF THE 'ISRAELITE.'[1]

"On July 15 (1854) will be issued the first number of the *Israelite*, a weekly paper devoted to the interests of the Jewish community, in which Jewish history, poetry, literature, religion, political and social position, and the affairs of the schools, congregation, and institutions will be freely discussed and commented upon.

"A journal having as interesting an object in view as the discussion of affairs, past and present, of the Hebrew people will doubtless be welcomed

[1] *Israelite*, vol. i., No. 1.

by every friend of literature; it will be especially sought after by every Jew who is desirous of having his time-honoured faith defended from the numerous attacks made on it and the scandals uttered against it by those fanatics who least comprehend its merits (merits that ages of cruel political and ecclesiastical persecutions have fruitlessly striven to misrepresent and keep in abeyance).

"The paper will be under the editorial supervision of the undersigned, aided by an efficient corps of assistants, and arrangements have been made with able correspondents for an early publication of every transaction in Europe and America of interest to the Jewish public. The columns of the paper will moreover be open for the free, open, and fair discussion of every topic tending to elevate the Hebrew religion and literature, but no article will be inserted known to contain personalities. The object of the journal being to advance, to enlighten, to improve, all its efforts and all its means must be used to that end solely.

"Much can be presented through the medium of such a paper as the *Israelite* proposes to be, and the hope is entertained that the children of the Mosaic faith, widely scattered as they are through this vast continent, may learn in the pages of this

journal more of their revered faith, more of the piety of the martyrs who have suffered in its defence, more of the biography of its sages, its rabbins, its prophets, and its commentators, be awakened to a sense of their mission, know and feel its glorious tendency, and be thus taught to know themselves and to be drawn nearer and nearer in communion with their Creator."

The *Reminiscences* continue:

"I have often thought how little conception the general reader has of the emotions which sway a poet or author while engaged in literary composition; how little they imagine that sometimes every line has surged forth from an overcharged heart, and every word is a crystallized tear. These poor littérateurs, victims of careless humanity, pour out their heart's blood on the altar of historical progress in order to furnish this one matter for entertainment and pastime, and that one for execration and persecution. If all goes well the hungry poet is fed, though his heart be breaking the while. I have often been surprised that they do not all write—write bitterly—like Heine. Only that which is deeply felt can produce a deep effect, and that which is deeply felt is fed by the heart's blood. I have often experienced this, but why it is so I know not.

"The prospectus was well received in Cincinnati for the most part. Naturally, only a few friends were enthusiastic. The replies from the country were few, and still fewer from other cities. The indifference was greater than the objection to reform. Shortly thereafter I visited with Dr. Rosenfeld, a friend in Madison, Indiana, where about ten Jewish families lived, to whom I gave the prospectus. Seven of them declared they could not read English; one said that a Jewish paper was a useless commodity, and two subscribed. Several days later I visited Louisville for the first time. I found there a well organized congregation with a beautiful synagogue. Mr. Gotthelf was preacher and chazan. I delivered two public addresses there. I was admired by the public, and made a number of very warm friends. My prospectus was received coldly, except by the few friends of reformed tendencies, who were very enthusiastic. At the end of June we had about five hundred subscribers for the *Israelite*, and began to print and mail one thousand copies. The first number appeared on the sixth of July.[1] It contained the beginning of a novel, 'The Con-

[1] The first number was dated July 15, 1854, which was evidently an error as that was a Saturday. It should probably have been July 14th, as the second number was dated July 21.

vert,' a poem, news, leading articles, my Fourth-of-July oration, an opening article on the institutions of Cincinnati, and miscellanea. As a matter of course, everyone in Cincinnati had to see the paper whose motto was 'Let there be light,' which was to voyage through the world bearing the name of Israel.

"I knew full well that every beginning is difficult; but I had no idea that the establishment of a Jewish weekly would prove as difficult as it did. Three things particularly were wanting, viz., confidence in the editor; secondly, writers; thirdly, readers. The secular press took scarcely any notice of 'the little Jewish paper,' as some called it. Abroad the paper was unknown, and no one even mentioned it, except the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, which noticed it in its news columns. All this neither angered nor surprised me; for I have never cared whether I was mentioned, praised, or blamed; besides I knew very well that my paper would have to be simple and popular; for I wanted to write for the people, *i. e.*, for my people. This would not give scholars any reason for particular admiration. I was convinced that I could not count on the support of the press.

"A number of friends had promised me original

contributions and translations; but when the campaign was ready to be opened, I found myself without an army. My sorriest embarrassment lay in the fact that I had announced Jewish novels in the prospectus, and could not obtain any. I wished to reawaken the slumbering patriotism by Jewish stories, and thus overcome the indifference. I had an object, therefore, in desiring novels; but, despite all promises, I had none. I had no choice but to write novels in the sweat of my brow. During the first year I wrote two, 'The Convert' and 'The Shoemaker's Family,' the latter with a historical background. These assisted the paper greatly. How did I write my novels? I wrote the required chapter every week, but no sooner than I had to. The first pages were set up while the last were being written. On one occasion I was in a sorry plight; I had made two maidens fall in love with one and the same character, and I had to get rid of one of them. I was in sore straits. How was I to get rid of a lovelorn female? I had no experience in such things, and yet I wanted to dispose of her decently, romantically, and effectively. I therefore had the poor thing become insane, and the unhappy creature jump from a window during the conflagration of the Ghetto of Frankfort and thus meet her death.

The poor creature was greatly mourned and wept for the following Saturday, and all the tears fell upon my burdened conscience. The most serious feature of the whole matter was that my wife made sport of me every Thursday evening, and declared stoutly that I had forgotten entirely how to enact a lover's part.

"A still greater difficulty lay in procuring readers. It was very hard to obtain such. No one was used to reading a Jewish paper. My personal friends read the paper and sought to circulate it; but their number was, sad to say, very small. I received frequently communications of the following import from the country: 'We are not Jews. We do not need a Jewish paper. We do not wish to be known as Jews. There is no honour in being a Jew. I have nothing to do with Jews.' . . . The fact is, that very few could read English, and the fewest of these wanted to be known as Jews. Frivolity and indifference were the order of the day, and in the cities atheism and hatred of all religion were rampant among the Germans. This was the case in Cincinnati, particularly under the ægis of the Freeman's Hall. It did not profit me to have attacked, scourged, and finally routed atheism with all the weapons at my command; for it took time to accomplish this. The mass was

large and unapproachable, and my arguments were slow in convincing a foolish, misguided, and semi-cultured class of people who repeat, parrot-like, whatever happens to be the fad of the hour."

The *Israelite* was in every way a true organ published in the interest of Israel, and during nearly a half century under the editorship of Wise the paper was the fearless champion of the Jew, the zealous defender of his civil as well as religious rights, and the staunch advocate of his cause. Without the advocacy of the *Israelite*, without the watchfulness of its intrepid editor, and without his constant and persistent appeals, protests, and demands in behalf of the American Jew, the Jew today would not have reached the position he enjoys in this country. From the establishment of the paper to the death of its founder and editor, a brave fight was made by the *Israelite* for the Jew; it always insisted upon the fundamental truth of the Declaration of Independence, that all men are created equal, and at all times insisted vehemently that the underlying principles of this government, the separation of church and state, be adhered to, and that in the domain of politics no discrimination be made against citizens because of their religion.

While in Albany Wise had frequently written

to the *Asmonean* protesting against the common practice of government officials characterizing this country as a Christian Nation. He had also objected strenuously to the discrimination against the Jews on account of their religion.

He continued this policy in the *Israelite*, and on many different occasions when the rights of the Jews were ignored or denied, as in Thanksgiving proclamations, the Swiss Treaty, the reading of the Bible in the public schools, the infamous Grant Order No. 11, the enactment of laws declaring certain Christian religious days public holidays, the addresses of public officials in public assemblies, the attempt to amend the United States Constitution by inserting a religious clause, and the Russian Treaty and Passport question, the *Israelite* immediately called attention to the denial of rights, to the abuse of the Jew, and demanded redress and fair treatment, and proclaimed to the world that in free America the Jew was the equal of his neighbour and entitled to the enjoyment of equal political rights.

The *Israelite* began its criticism of Thanksgiving proclamations, on account of their sectarian form, in its first volume. In the issue of December 15, 1854,[1] there is a long editorial reviewing the pro-

[1] Vol. i., No. 23.

clamations issued in the previous months and those of Governors Seymour, of New York; Washburn, of Massachusetts; Baker, of New Hampshire; Bryce, of Vermont, and Hopkins, of Maine, are singled out because of their Christian tone and illiberal and narrow views.

Probably the editor of the *Israelite* had no warmer and closer friend than Salmon P. Chase, who, in January, 1856, entered upon his first term as Governor of Ohio. In 1855, Chase was one of the speakers at the opening of Zion College, an institution established by Wise to educate ministers, and on several occasions he advised Dr. Wise that it would be much better for him to attach himself to the rising Republican party—then the party of progress and reform—than to work for a religious idea in a narrow circle. Yet this friendship did not prevent the *Israelite* from protesting in unmistakable words when Governor Chase, in issuing his Thanksgiving proclamation in the fall of 1856, used this language: "In conformity with a custom sanctioned by Legislative Resolves, commended by the practice of my predecessors in the executive office, and in itself highly becoming a Christian people, I, Salmon P. Chase," etc.

In the issue of November 14, 1856,[1] this docu-

[1] Vol. iii., No. 19.

ment is called illiberal and the following extracts from an editorial show the attitude of the *Israelite* toward the State: "The Governor addresses himself to a Christian people, but he ought to know that the people of Ohio are neither Christian nor Jewish; they are a free and independent people.

"Next the Governor desires us to thank God 'for the mercies of redemption and the hopes of immortality.' Fall upon your knees, Jews, deists, infidels, and atheists, and thank God that Jesus of Nazareth died on the cross to redeem the people of Ohio, as His Excellency, the Governor, decrees. On the whole, we do not see by what right the Governor of Ohio assumes the prerogative of exercising a religious authority. This is, to say the least, unrepublican and inconsistent with the constitution of the State. . . .

"In conclusion, however, we must say, in justice to the Governor, that we do not believe this document to have been examined closely by him. He considered it immaterial and unimportant and cared little what his secretary wrote. So do we care little about the whole matter. We merely dislike to see sectarian views grafted on the people."

Governor Chase, in answer to a letter of inquiry from Dr. Lilienthal, wrote: "I look for the coming

of a day when the icy barriers created between brethren of the same great family by religious differences will dissolve and disappear under the fervid rays of truth. Our creeds are many, our Father is one."

Commenting on this letter in the *Israelite* of November 21, 1856,[1] the editor said: "The correspondence before us can be considered a private matter and no more. A state paper, however, is a public and official document filed among the historical records of the State and becomes a part of our history; hence the insult offered in such a document to any portion of the community cannot be eradicated by a private letter. We know and fully appreciate the sentiments of the Hon. S. P. Chase, but in this case we have nothing to do with him; the Governor of Ohio stands accused. . . . We are honestly tired of protesting every year against the illiberal and unconstitutional proclamations."

This was the beginning of a series of protests against the illiberal tendency of the times; against the frequent efforts to amend the Constitution of the United States by adopting an amendment expressly recognizing Christianity, and against all laws, State and Federal, that in any way abridged

[1] Vol. iii., No. 20.

the rights and privileges of the Jews or offended them in the exercise of their religion.

It is unnecessary to refer to every protest on these subjects; however, a careful reading of its editorial pages during the years 1854–1900 discloses that the *Israelite*, with its accustomed vigilance, called attention to every fanatical and sectarian act, and contained criticisms directed against Sunday or Blue Laws, the Federal and State acts declaring such Christian festivals as Christmas, New Year's Day, and Good Friday public holidays, the various attempts at Christianizing the Constitution, and the effort to prevent any but Christian chaplains in the Union army during the rebellion.

The importance of these topics justifies the following quotations from an editorial in the *Israelite* of January 24, 1873,[1] which is typical of the series that appeared on this question: "Ohio will have a Constitutional Convention. Her constitution will be re-shaped, to be the basis of legislation for the next twenty years. Look out in time. Plenty of obnoxious clauses will turn up and post festum complaints come too late. It is necessary that some prominent Israelites be sent into that convention so that complaints be

[1] Vol. xx., No. 31.

not necessary on our part. We call the attention of our friends to this point, especially of Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, etc., to be on the lookout on this subject.

"We want free schools and free colleges without any sort of religion in them. We want equal rights for all. We want State institutions purged of sectarianism. Wanting this, as we do, have your men there to do it."

During the campaign of 1876 the *Israelite* urged the defeat of Col. Barnes, Republican candidate from Hamilton County, because he had supported a petition to Christianize the Ohio constitution, and during October of that year the *Toledo Blade* severely criticized the attitude of the *Israelite*. There are two very strong editorial answers to the *Blade*, one in the issue of October 20, 1876, the other October 27[1]:

"We have protested fifteen years since against the insolence of politicians and their violations of constitutional provisions. When Congress excluded the Jews and the Catholics from the chaplaincy in the United States army, we protested, although none in the Congress would listen except Mr. Vallandigham, of Ohio. When General Grant's insolent order No. 11 appeared, expelling

[1] *Israelite*, vol. xxvii., Nos. 16 and 17.

the Jews from his department, we protested, although none in Congress except Mr. Pendleton, of Ohio, and Governor Powell, of Kentucky, would give us any assistance. When the late Vice-President Wilson publicly insulted the Jews in the Senate of the United States and it had become fashionable in Washington among speakers and correspondents to insult some Jew or throw suspicion on some Catholic, we protested, although demagogues and idiots decried us as a traitor, a secessionist, a sympathizer with treason. When Generals Wright, Butler, and a number of post commanders, provost marshals, spies, and clandestine traders insulted and slandered the Jew, we protested again, and if it had not been for Abraham Lincoln and Salmon P. Chase there would have been none in Washington to listen. When the Republican Congress imposed upon the country a number of Christian and Puritan holidays, we protested, and there was none in Washington to listen. When bigots made the public schools Protestant chapels, and placed a Protestant praying individual everywhere without right or reason, we protested as we did when they wanted to make the Constitution and the constitutions sectarian instruments. We protested against the insolence of imposing Sunday laws, temperance

laws, and Blue laws upon the Republic. . . . This country needs subsoiling, and will have it. . . . This is a Democratic Republic and must be governed by honest men without hypocrisy or insolence, without religious lies and imposition, and also without Blue laws, Sunday laws, Puritan holidays, God's special police hereabouts, Bible fanatics or other fanatics."

THE SWISS QUESTION

As early as May, 1852, Wise took a prominent part in calling upon the Israelites in this country to protest against the action of the Swiss Government in discriminating against the Jews of that country. In the *Asmonean* of May 28, 1852,[1] under the head, "A call to the American Israelites," he wrote:

"Brethren, Beloved in God . . . I call upon you to arise and in the first place to pray in your synagogues to the God of Truth and Mercy . . . that He in His grace may remove from our unhappy brethren in Europe and elsewhere the shame and degradation which the whole miserable remnants of barbarism, despotism, and fanaticism have thrown upon them, and under which they now

[1] Vol. vi., page 44.

suffer and sigh. And that you may appoint men who enjoy your confidence to meet in New York in order to frame and adopt a petition to Congress requesting our Government to protest against the illegal, inhuman, and degrading laws which have been forced upon our brethren by the Pope in Rome and by the Government in Switzerland. Let such petitions be signed and sent to all American Israelitish congregations; let every man exert himself to have it signed by as many as possible of our fellow-citizens of other creeds who feel kindly disposed towards an oppressed and suffering people. And then forward the petitions to Congress without any unnecessary delay. Do not ask what the consequences will be. It is our sacred duty to act immediately, to protest as loud as we can, to send our transatlantic brethren the one comfort that we remember them; that our hearts bleed because of their misery; that we weep when we remember Zion. Congress will regard the prayer of the hundred thousand of faithful citizens, and the powerful word of our Government will check the enemies of Israel. Those congregations which are too distant from New York to send a delegate, let them appoint a man who lives in New York, or let them send a written copy of their views, respecting the nature of such petition, to

the editor of the *Asmonean* to be laid before the meeting, and it will be duly regarded, but let the movement be a general one of all the American Israelites.

"Do not waste away the precious time with unnecessary controversies; not words but actions are required of you, follow the noble impulse of your heart and speak out unitedly. Hold mass meetings and report immediately to the public press, and let us come before Congress before the close of the present session; let us hasten to the rescue of our sighing brethren, and God will hear you and comfort you when you sigh; let us show our transatlantic brethren that their woe touches and wounds our hearts, and God will have mercy and distil healing balms into your wounds wherever you will need it."

A few years later Wise, now the editor of the *Israelite*, found occasion again to discuss the Swiss question. On November 8, 1855, ratifications were exchanged of a treaty entered into between the United States and the Swiss Confederation. Article I. of this treaty reads in part: "The citizens of the United States of America and the citizens of Switzerland shall be admitted and treated upon a footing of reciprocal equality in the two countries when such admission and treatment

shall not conflict with the constitutional or legal provisions, federal as well as state and cantonal, of the contracting parties." In 1850 when this treaty had been proposed, Mr. Dudley Mann, the American negotiator, wrote to Daniel Webster, then Secretary of State under Fillmore: "Any Canton can permit an Israelite to become a citizen upon the same conditions as a Christian and consequently one hailing from the United States can establish himself and trade as a native, a privilege which I am assured will never be denied." According to the *Israelite* of July 31, 1857,[1] owing to protests on the part of the Jews, the ratification of the treaty was postponed. It was, however, subsequently ratified.

In 1853 a Mr. Gootman, a Jew and a citizen of the United States, had some difficulty in acquiring a domicile in one of the cantons, and at his request our minister resident at Berne, Hon. Theodore Fay, procured the necessary permission.[2] In 1855 the convention of 1850 was again considered by our government and the *Israelite* called Secretary of State Marcy's attention to the obnoxious article and Secretary Marcy assured the editor that nothing unjust or unfair would be

[1] Vol. iv., No. 4.

[2] Executive Documents, No. 76, 36th Congress, 1st session.

done.[1] Nevertheless, the treaty as originally drafted was ratified. In 1857 arose the second Gootman case. The editor of the *Israelite* received a letter from Mr. Muhlhauser, an optician, a Jew and a citizen of the United States, in which it was stated that Mr. Fay, the United States Minister at Berne, had expressed an opinion that under the treaty a Jew, although a citizen of the United States, had no redress if certain Swiss cantons denied him right of domicile and other valuable privileges. On receipt of this letter, which is printed in the *Deborah* of August 7, 1857,[2] Wise took the matter up with the State Department. His only satisfaction at that time was a brief note from Secretary of State Cass, enclosing a copy of the treaty, and this was the first intimation that such a treaty had been made. The *Israelite* then began the famous fight for equal rights of the Jews who were citizens of the United States.

On July 31, 1857, the paper says[3]: "The treaty in question was made in violation of the Constitutional laws and by an assumption of a power never granted to the Government. It is unjust for it protects the acquired rights and privileges of but

[1] Vol. iv., No. 4.
[2] *Deborah*, vol. iii., No. 5.
[3] *Israelite*, vol. iv., No. 4.

one class of citizens. . . . Congress should be memorialized at the next session by all who are to do it, so that the wrong inflicted on the Jewish citizens of this country be remedied forthwith. . . . Our exchanges are respectfully requested to notice this matter and give their opinions on the subject to the community."

In the issue of the very next week, August 7, 1857,[1] the following notice appears on the first page of the paper in large type:

"AGITATE!

"CALL MEETINGS

"ENGAGE THE PRESS IN YOUR FAVOUR:

"ISRAELITES, FREEMEN, CITIZENS—Let not the disgrace of the treaty between the United States and Switzerland remain upon the history of our country. Do not stand the insult heaped upon the Jewish citizens by unprincipled diplomacy. Hold public meetings, give utterance to your sentiments, resolve upon a proper course of action against that mean and illegal instrument made in violation of the Constitution of the United States. Try to win the press in favour of your cause and rest not until this outrage is blotted from

[1] *Israelite*, vol. iv., No. 5.

the United States' records. Slaves and cowards only will submit to such an outrage; we are men and must be treated as such. Decide in your meetings upon efficient measures to have your voice heard, publish your resolutions in your local papers and send us a copy thereof, that a concert of actions be ensured."

This agitation on the part of the *Israelite* began to bear fruit immediately. The issues of August 14th and 21st[1] contain editorials from the Cincinnati *Enquirer*, Chicago *Press*, Louisville *Journal*, Shelbyville *Republican Banner*, Chicago *Daily Journal*, Vincennes *Gazette*, all condemning the treaty. The paper comments as follows: "We have selected the above [editorials] out of about sixty papers which comment on this subject, which unanimously declare the Swiss treaty unjust and unbecoming our government. There will be no doubt but that the President will take proper steps to rectify it when brought before him in a proper shape."[2]

During the following weeks, the *Israelite* prints the reports of indignation meetings held in various cities of the country. On September 2, 1857, Baltimore held a meeting and appointed a committee to meet with similar committees of other

[1] Vol. iv., Nos. 6-7.

[2] *Israelite*, vol. iv., No. 7.

cities. The report of this meeting was sent to the *Israelite*. On September 24th, the Baltimore committee wrote to Wise,[1] informing him that it had deemed it wise to call a convention at Baltimore, October 28th, to discuss the Swiss question and requesting him to give publicity to the call and urging him to support this attempt to bring matters to a head. On October 9, 1857,[2] under the head, "A Call to the Community," The *Israelite* said: "The Swiss question has been discussed long enough; action, decisive action is necessary. We believe the proposition of the Baltimore committee is the best. Let the representatives of the different cities meet in Baltimore October 28th, proceed to Washington and lay our grievances before the President, and we entertain no doubt redress will be had. Elect your representatives, let them be in Baltimore the 28th inst., and let us do our duty. It is an honest and honourable struggle on behalf of justice and principles. Let none stand back. The honour of our country and the principles of liberty no less than our honour abroad imperatively demand that we act. Go at it without delay." The same issue states that the French Jews had become interested in the matter.

[1] *Israelite*, vol. iv., No. 13. [2] *Ibid.*, vol. iv., No. 14.

On October 28th, the various delegates to the convention to protest against the Swiss treaty met in the hall of the Young Men's Hebrew Association, Baltimore, and organized by electing Isaac M. Wise, of Cincinnati, Chairman, and Philip Herzberg, of Baltimore, Secretary. The committee decided that a memorial be drafted, to be presented to the President of the United States, requesting a declaration that this government did not and does not understand the obnoxious paragraph of the Swiss treaty as construed by the Swiss authorities, and that the President be requested to give this explanation to the Swiss government, and cause it to alter the wording of the article to that effect. The Committee on Memorial consisted of Messrs. M. J. Cohen, M. Bijur, and Isaac M. Wise, and by agreement Mr. M. Bijur, of Louisville, wrote the memorial, which was signed by M. J. Cohen, Maryland; Rev. Dr. Isaac M. Wise, Ohio; Martin Bijur, Kentucky; M. M. Gersteley, Illinois; Louis F. Leopold, Ohio; Rev. Dr. H. Hochheimer and Philip Herzberg of Maryland.

The committee proceeded to Washington and on October 31, 1857, was presented to President Buchanan by Hon. P. Phillips, Congressman from Alabama. The committee, after its interview with

President Buchanan, issued the following official statement: "After listening to the views and objects expressed, and receiving the memorial, the President reviewed at some length the principle involved in that treaty; expressed his convictions that the treaty would never have received the approval of his predecessor had it been understood in its present effect, and unequivocally promised a speedy and energetic course of action with a view to a remedy not inconsistent with international faith. We feel satisfied that the Israelites of the United States may place implicit confidence in the executive and that their rights as citizens of the United States will be zealously maintained. We publish these cheerful facts in the discharge of our duties as delegates with the request to our co-religionists to abstain from further agitation on the subject."

President Buchanan was as good as his word. On November 5, 1857, within five days after receiving the delegation, Secretary of State Cass writes to Hon. Theodore S. Fay, Minister of the United States at Berne: "I am directed by the President to instruct the consul at Berne to use all means in his power to effect the removal of the odious restrictions complained of, which, it is understood, exist in some Cantons."[1] Our gov-

[1] Executive Documents, 36th Congress, 1st Sess., No. 76.

ernment and the Israelites particularly were fortunate at this time in being represented at Berne by so accomplished and faithful a minister as Hon. Theodore S. Fay. As already stated, Mr. Fay, in 1853, had interfered in behalf of a Mr. Gootman. His work now, under instructions from Washington, was to him both a labour of love and duty.

The correspondence discloses that Mr. Fay began at once to secure redress for the Jews, and acted with persistency and vigour. His note submitted to the Swiss government on May 26, 1859 (published in the *Israelite*, beginning vol. vi., No. 47, and completed vol. vii., No. 11) is a most exhaustive and conclusive presentation of the question, and, in time, Mr. Fay succeeded in inducing many of the Swiss cantons that still had restrictive Jewish laws to repeal them.

The negotiations extended over many years, and, like all diplomatic matters, especially where there was no cable communication, were very slow. Every now and then the *Israelite* would manifest its impatience. On Aug. 27, 1858,[1] the *Israelite* printed an important editorial on the Swiss question, in which a report of an interview between the Secretary of State and a committee, consisting

[1] Vol. iv., No. 8.

of members Cohen, of Baltimore, Leopold, of Cleveland, and Wise, of Cincinnati, is given. Also a summary of Mr. Fay's notes. Commenting on the cantonal restrictions the editor says: "It is impossible for an American to read these responses [*i. e.*, cantonal answers on restrictions] without being disgusted with the loathsome scent of mediaeval doctrines and views. Yes, indeed, there is enough narrowness of mind in those documents to counterbalance all the illiberality of Russia, Rome, and Spain. The authors of these documents always speak of American Israelites, without reflecting for a moment, that this is a term unknown in American constitutions or laws, unknown to the power with which they entered upon a reciprocal treaty; hence this distinction can not, and dare not, be imposed on said treaty. But it is not for us to debate the question; it is now in the hands of our Government, who will not suffer any citizen to be wronged."

Commenting on this editorial, Mr. Fay, under date of October 28, 1858, writing to General Cass, says: "Some time ago I received a copy of the *Israelite*, an American newspaper, containing an article on the Swiss restrictions against the Israelites, with an account of the visit of the editor and other Jewish gentlemen to the State Department

in August last, and an extract from my dispatches, with the résumé forwarded by me of legislation of the Cantons with regard to the Jews. I thought it proper to show this to President Furrer, who had it translated and placed upon the table of the Federal Council. The article contained some biting remarks in language most unreserved, but I thought it better to show it myself, rather than it should be sent by any one else. I have no doubt copies of it will be communicated to the Cantonal governments, and that a good effect will be produced, although not so good as if the language had been less strong than the arguments."

This letter of Mr. Fay and the various articles quoted above show conclusively that the credit for the agitation in this Swiss treaty matter belongs to the *Israelite*, and its fearless and vigilant editor. That the several cantons, who for a time persisted in their harsh regulations, finally yielded, and that the American Jew was accorded, in the end, equal privileges with his fellow-citizens, was the work of Mr. Theodore S. Fay. All honour to him. In the *Israelite* of May 4, 1859,[1] the editor, commenting on a letter received from Mr. Fay expressing his hope of success, says: "Thus, Mr. Fay identifies his name with the benefactors

[1] Vol. vi., No. 44.

of Israel, and erects for himself a lasting monument of gratitude in the hearts of all those who sympathize with our wronged brethren."

During the ensuing decade most of the cantonal restrictions against the Jews were removed, and in 1874 religious liberty was established by the Swiss constitution, and thereafter the treatment of aliens became a federal rather than a cantonal question.

THE RUSSIAN QUESTION

The *Israelite* always severely criticized Russia's attitude towards its Jewish subjects and the Jews of America. As early as November 16, 1855,[1] the severity of Russia's treatment is spoken of, and on December 28, 1855,[2] the *Israelite* rejoices at the defeat of Russia in Crimea. "Russia, the arch enemy of civilization and enlightenment, of equal rights and liberty, the powerful and relentless defender of privileges and exclusive laws, this taskmaster of thirty-four millions of serfs, Russia, the gigantic scarecrow of the friends of liberty, was chastised and humiliated by the allied powers in the year 1855." Throughout the next quarter of a century no opportunity for criticizing the

[1] Vol. ii., No. 19. [2] *Ibid.*, No. 25.

Russian policy was neglected. In March, 1879, the *Israelite* printed a letter from Mr. H. Rosenstraus, a citizen of this country, calling attention to the great discrimination against him in Russia because he was a Jew. The editor immediately sent his son, Leo Wise, to Washington to investigate the situation. He reported that Secretary of State Evarts stated nothing could be done. Ever since April, 1879, the *Israelite* maintained a consistent position on the Russian Jewish question to wit: That it is the solemn duty of this government to procure the same rights and privileges for all its citizens, irrespective of race or creed, and that as long as this government does not do so, it is acting unjustly toward the Jew. As long as an American citizen of Jewish faith is denied right to travel in Russia as of right, this government is permitting discriminations.

It was not, however, until more than a decade after Wise's death that the Congress of the United States unanimously endorsed President William H. Taft's action in abrogating the Russian treaty because no assurances would be given that an American citizen of Jewish descent could enjoy the same privileges in Russia accorded to citizens of other religious faiths.

THE INFAMOUS GRANT ORDER NO. 11

On December 17, 1862, General U. S. Grant, Department Commander of the armies of the United States, with headquarters at Oxford, Mississippi, issued the following order, known as General Order No. 11: "The Jews, as a class, violating every regulation of trade established by the Treasury Department, also department orders, are hereby expelled from the department within twenty-four hours from the receipt of this order by the post commander. They will see that all this class of people are furnished with passes and requested to leave, and any one returning after such notification will be arrested and held in confinement until opportunity occurs of sending them out as prisoners, unless furnished with permits from these headquarters. No passes will be given these people to visit headquarters for the purpose of making personal application for trade."

Toward the end of December, 1862, the Jews of Cincinnati, Louisville, Memphis, and Paducah were startled at the information received from their co-religionists within the military lines of General Grant that all Jews had been expelled from the department of General Grant. In the *Israelite* of December 26, 1862,[1] there was printed

[1] Vol. ix., No. 25.

a general order of Col. John V. DuBois, post commander at Holly Springs, Mississippi. This order used the following insolent language: "On account of scarcity of provisions all cotton speculators, Jews, and other vagrants, etc. . . . having no permission from the Commanding General will leave town within twenty-four hours." The *Israelite* unmercifully scored Col. DuBois, and among other things said: "It is not the Jew, it is the American whom that order disgraces. In us it is not the Jew but the man and American citizen who feels outraged by such proceedings. As a Jew we feel ourselves in our religious conviction far, far beyond the slanderous jargon of anybody, far beyond the reach of general orders, stump speeches, or other ephemeral pieces of paper. . . . As a man and a citizen, however, we feel outraged and demand justice from the hands of the chief magistrate of the country. We send this paper to the President, Mr. Stanton, Generals Halleck, Grant, Rosecrans, and others, and hope they will bestow proper attention on the subject. At the same time, however, we request our friends to collect all orders and affidavits on this point, to be brought before the President, and to be placed on record for future reference, for information of the historian who will render an impartial

verdict." In the issue of January 2, 1863,[1] the paper stated that the Holly Springs order had been issued in accordance with instructions from General Grant, and that a gentleman within the lines doubting the order and asking for permission to telegraph the General was arrested. The editorial comment is naturally very bitter and pointed. "Need we comment on this handsome piece of military despotism? We trust not. . . . But we do not care for causes. The orders above mentioned do exist, and this suffices to alarm every honest friend of the Republic. Are we to be slaves of military chieftains? Are we playthings in the hands of presumptuous men to abuse and maltreat us at pleasure? Are we frogs and mice to be trampled under anybody's feet, or are we men who stand by their rights? Is there no law in the land, no authority higher than bayonets? If we can stand this, then we are unworthy of being citizens of a free country. If we do stand all this, we must not wonder if one day anybody will treat us as pariahs and outcasts of society. Israelites, citizens of the United States, you have been outraged. Your rights as men and citizens trampled in the dust, your honour disgraced as a class, you have officially been degraded. It is

[1] Vol. ix., No. 26.

your duty, your duty of self-defence, your duty first to bring this matter directly before the President of the United States and demand redress and satisfaction due to the citizens thus mortified and offended. It is not only the business of the Jew to look to these matters, it is everybody's affair. . . . If the Jews, as a religious community, are handled thus, how will the Catholics, Unitarians, Universalists, or any other religious denomination be treated, if a general or provost officer sees fit to come down on one or the other?" It seems that the only Cincinnati papers that condemned these orders were the *Enquirer* and *Volksfreund.*

A meeting of Israelites was held at Cincinnati, and a committee, consisting of Rabbis Wise and Lilienthal was appointed to meet with similar committees from Louisville and Paducah. Before this committee arrived at Washington, Mr. Kaskel, of Paducah, went to Washington and was introduced to President Lincoln by Congressman Gurley, of Cincinnati. The President upon learning the genuineness of the order, immediately directed General Halleck to revoke it. The Cincinnati committee learned of the revocation of the order at Philadelphia *en route* to Washington. They decided to go to Washington and meet the President. In a report of this meeting the editor

writes[1]: "We were introduced to the President, who, being all alone, received us with that frank cordiality which, though usually neglected, becomes men high in office so well. Having expressed our thanks for the promptness and dispatch in revoking General Grant's order, the President gave utterance to his surprise that General Grant should have issued so ridiculous an order, and added: 'To condemn a class is, to say the least, to wrong the good with the bad. I do not like to have a class or nationality condemned on account of a few sinners.' The committee, however, succeeded in having Congressman George H. Pendleton, of Cincinnati, and Senator Powell, of Kentucky, introduce resolutions into their respective bodies condemning the order. Both resolutions were tabled in the House by a vote of 56 to 53 on motion of Mr. Washburne, and in the Senate by a vote of 30 to 5 on motion of Mr. Hale. The speedy protest on the part of the Israelites of Cincinnati, Louisville, and Paducah, in which latter city the order was put in force, and the insistence of fair treatment, brought about the revocation.

In the winter of 1868 General Grant was mentioned as the probable Republican candidate for

[1] *Israelite*, vol. ix., No. 28.

President. The *Israelite* of February 28, 1868, vigorously objected to his nomination on account of his conduct in December, 1862. After General Grant's nomination the *Israelite* said nothing about the order, but after his election in November, the *Israelite* "cheerfully published" the following letter of General Grant:

GALENA, Sept. 14, 1868.

MR. J. N. MORRIS,

DEAR SIR:—

In regard to order No. 11, hundreds of letters have been written to me about it by persons of the faith affected by it. I do not or did not answer any of the writers, but permitted a statement of the facts concerning the origin of the order to be made and given to some one of them for publication. I do not pretend to sustain the order. At the time of its publication I was incensed by a reprimand received from Washington for permitting acts which Jews within my lines were engaged in. . . . This order was issued and sent out without thinking of the Jews as a sect or race to themselves. . . . Give Mr. Moses assurances that I have no prejudice against sect or race, but want each individual judged by his own merits. Order No. 11 does not sustain this statement, I admit, but then I do not sustain that order. It never would have been issued if it had not been telegraphed the moment it was penned and without reflection.

In justice to General Grant, the *Israelite* of December 4, 1868, said, under the head, "The

Mysteries of General Grant's Order No. 11": "With the advance of our armies in the Southwest the cotton trade began to claim the attention of cotton traders. Some prominent gentlemen in Washington, Senators and high officials whose names we know, but do not wish to mention, were the first and most extensive cotton dealers at the time, and realized vast profits from the trade. Some Jewish houses in the West discovered the opportunity and went into the cotton trade. This was an unpleasant opposition to the Washington operators, for the Jews paid higher prices, bought cotton up, and brought the speculators down on them. . . . Nothing was easier at that time than to play chicaneries on the Jews. It was given out that the Jews smuggled gold across the lines to purchase cotton of the rebels, and everybody was ready to believe and to add in explanation, 'All Jews buy all the cotton, and all of them smuggle all the gold.' This was a master-stroke, for it led to secret instructions from headquarters to all commanders in the West to look after the Jews. . . . All these chicaneries and outrages did not terrify Jewish traders along the line especially in General Grant's department, where most of the cotton was. This set Washington operators to work against General Grant. . . .

On the 17th of December, 1862, General Grant, at Oxford, Mississippi, received the following instructions from Washington: 'We are reliably informed that the Jews in various cities are buying up the gold to take South and invest in cotton that will place in the hands of rebels increased means to carry on the war. That should be prevented. You will, therefore, take measures to prevent it in your department.' The natural consequences of this peremptory instruction after previous experience from headquarters, was the issue of order No. 11, exiling Jews from the Department of Tennessee. . . . The order came from Washington." The editor then states in his opinion that some high officials were in league with cotton speculators.

The position of the *Israelite* in the matter of the Grant order was a bold one, and its publication of every detail connected with the revocation was important to the American Jew at that time.

THE JEW AS A CITIZEN

The *Israelite* insisted at all times that a citizen of the Jewish faith was an American in nationality—a Jew in religion. Before the founding of the paper, while the editor was doing pioneer work at Albany,

it was the fashion of the day to hold up the Jew to ridicule on every possible occasion. Wise's *Reminiscences* contain many instances of his protest against such outrage. If, perchance, a crime were committed by a Jew the press of that day, unfortunately also of today, always recorded that a "German Jew" did so and so. The *Israelite* furnished the Jew with a paper that looked after his welfare and protested against the unjust treatment received at the hands of the press and public. Whenever there appeared in public prints anywhere any statement derogatory of the Jew, whenever any public official denounced the Jew or in any way spoke of him as differing from his neighbour, save in religion, the unjustly abused Jew found a fearless and trenchant defender in the *Israelite*. The editor constantly insisted that in America, the Jew deserved to be treated like his neighbour, provided he conducted himself properly.

As early as August 3, 1855,[1] the *Israelite* reprints a letter written to the Boston *Daily Times* in which the writer speaks of Masons as Christians, and says: "No, sir, I would have it known that here in Massachusetts, Masonry is a Christian, or rather a Protestant institution; Christian as it

[1] Vol. ii., No. 4.

merely tolerates Jews." In commenting on this letter the editor says: "The principles seemingly defended in the above article are anti-republican, and, therefore, a pasquil in a republican country. They tolerate the Jew; we say this is a falsehood. We tolerate the Massachusetts Episcopalians or any other sect. We have the same right to speak or think of them as they treat us, hence we tolerate them. There is no toleration in the United States, because there is no ruling church; there is a constitution made by the people and for the people, hence none can say who tolerate and who was tolerated."

When the New York *Tribune* printed a long article giving a description of the state of the Jews in Turkey, interwoven with most absurd misrepresentation, the *Israelite*, August 15, 1856,[1] in an editorial by associate editor Lilienthal, commented as follows: "We are really at a loss how to explain the fact that Horace Greeley, the champion of liberality, permits the columns of his paper to be used for such mediaeval-like calumnies and disgraceful stories. . . . Sir, the pretension in your paper that we are strangers wherever we reside is false and untrue. We are true citizens of this great and glorious republic, and have, ever

[1] Vol. iii., No. 6.

since we inhabited the soil, proved by actions that we are Americans. . . . We are Jews in religious respect, but as citizens we are as true and devoted to our country as any denomination whatever."

During the session of Congress, 1860–1861, Senator Wilson, of Massachusetts, in a speech delivered in the Senate of the United States replying to a speech of Senator Benjamin, of Louisiana, used this language: "His heart . . . was in the plot . . . to overthrow the government of his adopted country, which gives equality of rights even to that race that stoned prophets and crucified the Redeemer of the world."

The *Israelite*, in the issues of March 22 and 29, 1861,[1] severely criticized Senator Wilson for these remarks, exposed his ignorance of historical matter on this subject, and said: "But if this was not the case, we would still raise our voice against you, because we consider it outrageously wrong for any man to abuse the authority the people confide in him . . . for the base purpose of slandering, before the eyes of the world, a race of men and a class of peaceable citizens who have no defender, no advocate there to retaliate for them or plead their cause. Now, sir, you did insult every

[1] Vol. vii., Nos. 38, 39.

Israelite in this country and elsewhere; we do not care what his political opinions might be." The paper demanded an explanation. Evidently none was ever given by the Senator, and when he was nominated for Vice-President in 1872, the *Israelite* denounced him and reprinted its editorial of March 29, 1861.

The main object of the *Israelite* was to Americanize the Jew so that he should be under no disadvantage with his neighbour, and to that end it seized every opportunity to expose all who abused and maltreated the Jew solely on account of his religion. The files of the paper are replete with articles of the character quoted above, and toward the end of the editor's long career it was always a source of great satisfaction, as well as gratification to him, that the Jew was received on equal footing with his neighbour, and that religious hatred and ignorance had, in a very great measure, disappeared.

The *Israelite* did not advocate the cause of any political party. However, when any political party supported measures that tended to abridge the rights of any citizens, or that in any way leaned toward sumptuary legislation, or had in view the furtherance of Christianity, the *Israelite* did not hesitate to speak out and advocate the defeat of

such party and its measures. The editor, himself, was a thorough Democrat, a lover of freedom, opposed to all sumptuary and class legislation, to all attempts to Christianize the Constitution, to Know-Nothingism, and centralization, a true disciple of Jefferson, and, inasmuch as all he opposed was advocated by the Republican party of 1876, the *Israelite* boldly espoused the cause of Tilden.

The *Israelite*, however, always deprecated the nomination of Jews for public office, with the hope of solidifying the Jewish vote. To deserve its support, the candidate, though a Jew, must be qualified for the office. The editor always opposed and discouraged the organization of Jewish or Hebrew political clubs.

In the issue of July 20, 1855,[1] appears an editorial on the American or Know-Nothing party, written in answer to a complaint that no notice was taken of that party and its tenets by the editor.

"Nothing is more disgusting to us," he writes, "than the combination of religion and politics. If office seeking politicians enlist in their service the religious fanaticism of the multitude, they are evidently deprived of every particle of patriotism, for they ought to know, that is the beginning of the most furious civil war, that they kindle the most

[1] *Israelite*, vol. ii., No. 2

dangerous passions in the breast of men, and place the most destructive arms in the hands of an over-excited multitude. . . .

"It is perfectly ridiculous to us to hear our friends speak of liberty being more secure in the hands of Protestants than of Catholics. . . . Wherever the church rules there is no liberty, no equality, and none to expect as long as she rules; but there is no difference as to what sect predominates. This country has disavowed every connection with any church, and therefore we have a liberty which will last as long as none of the sects impress their intolerant spirit on the scheme of government. A Protestant government has as little similitude to a free government as a Catholic one has. . . . Let politics be not a matter of the church if you desire political liberty. But even if there was actually anything to fear from the Romish church we would still abhor the very idea of religious intolerance. Is our republic so weak, so unsatisfactory that we must fear its downfall by those who enjoy its benefits, then it is high time that the politicians repair their deficiencies instead of persecuting those who are dissatisfied. If the idea of Romanism is dangerous to the republic, are the Catholics not a small minority? Have we not a free press, liberty of

speech? Are these powerful instruments not strong enough to guard our republican institutions. . . . We beg you in the name of common sense do not so badly slander and outrage republicanism as to tell us that the lowest and most despicable passions of man, religious fanaticism and intolerance, are necessary to guard republicanism. Do not in the face of all history, past and present, endeavour to make us believe Protestant fanaticism is any better than Roman fanaticism or that a republic with exceptional laws with a system of proscription for religious opinions is anything like a republic. A republic must either have nothing to do with religion as our own, or mankind must come back to the simple principles of Moses and the Prophets. . . .

"We wish nothing and expect nothing from a religious party, we only want them to settle their religious difficulties in their churches and let our political affairs alone. Let religion be unto them a fear of God and not a medium to obtain public office. As regards the maintenance of our public institutions we want no churches to do it; the liberal sentiments of the generality, the free press and free speech, trial by jury and the citizens soldiers are all-sufficient to protect our constitution. Let the churches adopt measures against the de-

moralization of their members, the rest will be all right. The people of this country are no children that they must be led by guardians, by Jesuits, priests, bigots, hypocrites. We can pray for ourselves and manage our own affairs. Let them remain in their proper sphere or they will ruin their churches."

Wise has been criticized because he did not zealously advocate the abolition of slavery and because he favoured the Democratic party during the war. In politics he naturally was a disciple of Thomas Jefferson. The excerpts from his *Reminiscences* and his editorial writings which have been reprinted in this and previous chapters show conclusively his patriotism. He was unalterably opposed to any restrictions upon personal liberty, and to war.[1]

The *Israelite* had a hard financial struggle during the early years of its existence, and was just recovering from the effects of the 1857 panic when the conflict between the North and South seemed imminent. At this time (1860–1861), Wise was working very hard to bring about a union of Jewish congregations, and as there were many influential Jews living in the South, he believed in the event of disunion his project would be doomed to defeat.

[1] See note 2, pages 177–78 *supra*.

Besides, his paper had a large subscription list in the South, and he felt that he would be unable to publish his paper if there should be a breach between the North and South. Before the attack on Fort Sumter he was opposed to disunion, and hoped some compromise would be reached between the two sections. Certainly this attitude was not uncommon at that time. He opposed then, as he always did, political preaching, maintaining that politics were foreign to the pulpit.

Such a position, however, does not sustain the charges that he favoured slavery. Even so careful a writer as Max J. Kohler, in his article on "The Jews and the Anti-Slavery Movement,"[1] most unjustly charges Wise with sanctioning slavery. Mr. Kohler writes: "Dr. Raphall's remarks were most apologetic, but he took the square stand that Judaism sanctioned slavery and that that institution was morally right. Extreme as his position was, it cannot be regarded as original, nor did it lack approval, for Dr. Wise, in the *American Israelite*, and Isaac Leeser, in the *Occident*, expressed their approbation of his stand." As far as Leeser is concerned, Mr. Kohler is correct, and his citations, the *Occident*, January 24, 1861, p. 268, and January 31, 1861, p. 274, bear

[1] *American Jewish Historical Society Pub.*, vol. v.–vi., p. 150.

this construction. But as far as Wise is concerned, the statement is absolutely false, and his references to the following issues of the *Israelite*, vol. vii., pp. 172, 188, 205–6, 212, 220, 228, 230, 244, 254, 334, and 396, do not contain even a scintilla of evidence to that effect, and not a syllable from which such an inference could be drawn. Why Mr. Kohler misinterpreted these articles in so sweeping, false, and unjust a manner it is difficult to understand.

After the outbreak of hostilities, after Sumter had been fired on, Wise wrote in the *Israelite* of April 19, 1861,[1] under the head, "Silence our Policy": "They say civil war is commenced. . . . What can we say now? Shall we lament and weep like Jeremiah over a state of things too sad and too threatening to be looked on with indifference? We would only be laughed at. . . . Or should we choose sides with one of the parties? We cannot, not only because we abhor war, but also because we have dear friends and near relatives, beloved brethren and kinsmen in either section of the country that our heart bleeds in thinking of their distress, of the misery that might befall them. Therefore, silence must henceforth be our policy, silence on all questions of the day until

[1] Vol. vii., No. 42.

conciliation shall move the hearts of millions to a better understanding of the blessings of peace, freedom, and union." And so, with the exception of the protest against the infamous Order No. 11 above referred to, the editor was silent on the war.

Lincoln was assassinated on Friday night, April 14, 1865, and died early Saturday morning. The very night that Lincoln was shot, Dr. Wise delivered a peace oration at the synagogue, and on the following Sabbath morning he preached a great eulogy characterizing Lincoln as the "brightest jewel, the greatest hero, and noblest son of the nation." The *Israelite* of April 21, 1865,[1] appeared in heavy mourning, and contained a full report of his sermon eulogizing Lincoln.

THE BIBLE AND THE CINCINNATI PUBLIC SCHOOLS

In 1852, the Cincinnati Board of Education adopted a resolution providing that the opening exercises in every department of the schools shall commence by reading a portion of the Bible, by or under the direction of the teacher with appropriate singing by pupils. On September 28, 1855,[2] the *Israelite* said: "We agree to have the Bible read in the common schools. But this is not

[1] Vol. ix., No. 43. [2] Vol. ii., No. 12.

the case, nor is it intended to be the case. There is used in the public schools an English translation, or rather a version of the Bible. It is well known that every sect has another version of certain portions of the Bible. All sects are entitled to equal rights, hence all versions of the Bible must be read in the public schools or none." On November 1, 1869, the Cincinnati Board of Education, by a majority vote, repealed the Bible reading regulation and resolved that "Religious instruction and reading of religious books, including the Holy Bible, are prohibited in the Common Schools of Cincinnati, it being the true object and intent of this rule to allow the children of the parents of all sects and opinions in matters of faith and worship, to enjoy alike the benefits of the Common School fund." Immediately a fierce controversy was begun and prominent citizens engaged eminent counsel to enjoin the Board of Education from excluding the Bible from the public schools, claiming that the resolutions were in violation of law and against public policy and morality and an abuse of authority vested in law. The *Israelite* took a decided stand in the matter, and on October 8, 1869,[1] nearly a month before the injunction suit was begun, said, *inter alia:* "We

[1] Vol. xvii., No. 14.

are opposed to Bible reading in the schools. We want secular schools and nothing else. Nor has the state a shadow of right to support any other. As Jews we do not want any one to teach our young ones the religion of our fathers. We do it all ourselves.

"From a general standpoint, however, we are opposed to Bible reading in the school. The American people consists of a conglomeration of nationalities and sects united by the Constitution and laws of the United States, the common interests and the love of liberty and independence. The gist of the whole is, we agree to disagree on every point except public government, which we agree to support, maintain, and obey. . . .

"The public schools are institutions for the education of free, intelligent, and enlightened citizens. That is all. To this end we need good secular schools and nothing else. The state has no religion. Having no religion it cannot impose any religious instruction on the citizen, adult or child. The Bible is a book of religion—all admit this. By what right is it imposed on the public schools?"

On November 2, 1869, Messrs. Sage & Hinkle, William M. Ramsey & King, Thompson & Avery filed a petition in the Superior Court of

Cincinnati in behalf of Minor, *et al.*, *vs.* the Board of Education, to enjoin the Board from excluding the Bible. Messrs. Stanley and Samuel R. Matthews, George Hoadly, Stallo & Kittredge, and Walker & Connor, City Solicitors, represented the majority members of the Board. The case was elaborately and exhaustively argued before Judges Hagans, Storer, and Taft by Messrs. Sage, Ramsey, and King for the Bible reading, and Messrs. Stallo, Hoadly, and Stanley Matthews against the reading. The court granted the injunction. Judges Hagans and Storer each delivering a favourable opinion, Judge Taft dissenting. The Board of Education carried the case to the Supreme Court of Ohio, where the judgment below was reversed and the right of the Board of Education to dispense with the reading of the Bible fully established.[1] Since that time there has been no serious attempt made to introduce religious exercises into the Cincinnati public schools.

In July, 1874, the beginning of the twenty-first year of the *Israelite*, the name of the paper was changed to the *American Israelite*. In announcing the change of name, the editor made the following announcement: "The *Israelite* has organized an American Israel, and this was one of its main

[1] Board of Education *vs.* Minor, 23, Ohio State Reports, 211.

objects. The Hebrew is Americanized and his religion is naturalized, they are no longer strangers, and they are perfectly at home in this blessed country. . . . The *Israelite* will be called the *American Israelite*, to be distinguished from all other organs of the same name in this or in other countries."

Isaac Mayer Wise was a great editor, and during the years 1854 to 1900, he wrote continuously. Between 1854 and 1873, his leaders dealt with the necessity for a union of American congregations and the establishment of a theological institute for the proper training of Jewish ministers. After the union was established and the Hebrew Union College opened he continued to work for their support.

In addition to this special task he was the watchman in the tower, ever guarding the political and civil rights of the Jews, sufficient proof of which fact has already been given in this chapter. In later years his leading articles consisted of abstracts of sermons and lectures. In the columns of the *Israelite* will be found nearly all his great sermons, lectures, and treatises. He published in the paper likewise his annual reports as president of the Hebrew Union College and the Central Conference of American Rabbis. During his long

editorial career, the *Israelite* rarely appeared without containing some article from his pen.

He travelled frequently for the purpose of dedicating synagogues, laying corner-stones of new temples, inducting rabbis into office, delivering lectures, making propaganda for the union and the college, and attending conventions and conferences, and on these occasions he would be the faithful reporter of these various events, which were published as editorial correspondence.

In the forty-six volumes of the *Israelite* will be found many valuable autobiographical references. Wise wrote few letters, and, unfortunately, only a small number of these have been preserved. He, however, had a large number of correspondents in this country and abroad, and these he answered in his journal. No editor was ever more faithful. He could "make copy" easily. He wrote a legible hand, and prepared his own manuscript. When stenographers came in vogue he tried to dictate to them but was never able to do so, and the use of a typewriter was out of the question. The physical labour alone was almost herculanean. He continued his editorial work to the end, and on the day of his funeral, Thursday, March 29, 1900, appeared volume xlvi., No. 39, of the *American Israelite*, containing many articles from his pen

which had been sent to the printer on Friday, March 25, 1900, the day before he was stricken.

During his long editorial career he rarely indulged in personalities, and, while a severe and trenchant critic, he was always a generous opponent. His controversies with the leaders of orthodox Judaism were never bitter, and he never indulged in abusive criticism or descended to the depth of the vulgarity used against him. During the last quarter of a century of his life he rarely read the opposition press in which he was roundly abused week after week.

In July, 1855, he began the publication of a German weekly called *Die Deborah*, with the motto "Forwaerts Meine Seele." This journal, of which he was very fond, was a small eight-page paper published weekly in German. In its columns appeared his more intimate articles, and he frequently spoke of the paper as his "waste basket." Through its columns he would answer foreign correspondents who wrote to him in German. His most valuable contributions, not only to this journal, but to the history of Judaism in America, are his famous *Reminiscences* which were published in *Die Deborah* from July 3, 1874, to August 11, 1875, and treat of the first eleven years of his life in America, 1846 to 1857. These

Reminiscences, which have been largely drawn on in the preparation of this work, are charming, interesting, and contain a faithful picture of the conditions of Judaism in America during the decade 1846–1856. Unfortunately they ended abruptly. Wise did not wish to continue them, as he did not desire to give offence to many leading rabbis and prominent Jews who had opposed him in his work for the union and the college.

Rev. Dr. David Philipson, of Bene Israel congregation of Cincinnati, translated these *Reminiscences* shortly after he came to Cincinnati in 1889. This translation, which is carefully done, preserves the charm and spirit of the original German. The translation appeared weekly in the *American Israelite* between May 24, 1900, and January 10, 1901. In March, 1901, they were issued in book form with an appropriate introduction. In *Die Deborah* will be found many stories and some good verse by Wise. In July, 1899, in the salutatory to vol. xlv. of *Die Deborah*, Wise says that it is the second oldest Jewish German weekly in the world. He further states that many believe it to be a miracle that the paper has existed for forty-four years, during which time ten other weeklies and monthlies suspended publication.

He explains, however, naïvely: "But it is no miracle since the editor worked for nothing and the publisher yearly lost money. . . . We wanted to keep it up for those who enjoyed it. . . . Also to have a German Jewish organ . . . as a bond between us and the greater part of European co-religionists. . . ." With the death of Dr. Wise the publication of the "faithful" *Deborah* ceased.

Without the *Israelite* and *Die Deborah*, Wise would have never been able to accomplish his life's work, for he early realized the power of the press.

In the winter of 1884, he delivered a series of Friday night lectures on "The Genesis and Contents of Modern American Judaism." In the *American Israelite* of April 4, 1884,[1] is a report of one of these lectures. He says: "Those familiar with American Judaism will readily admit that it was built up and promulgated by these Cincinnati organs in which not only Lilienthal, Kalisch, Rothenheim, Sonnenschein, Zindorf, Hahn, and other distinguished men could give utterance to their ideas and opinions, but in which laymen and dilettantes were largely encouraged to speak, and they did speak, . . which made Judaism a

[1] Vol. xxx., No. 40.

popular theme among American Israelites and American Christians. Most of the rabbis kept aloof from the *American Israelite*, and many of them were bitter enemies and violent opponents. . . . American Judaism had to be built up without their aid, and, in many instances, in spite of their opposition. While men like Einhorn, Adler, Hirsch, and Huebsch, and other prominent and learned men were faithful to the cause of reform, and did beneficial work in their various spheres, they alas! but Germanized instead of Americanized, and particularized instead of uniting. They stood with one foot in Europe and it took them a long time to find out their mistake. Some never did, some never helped. Thus, American Judaism was forced to grow out of the American Israelites, out of the heart and soul of our people, from the hands of men of practical piety and practical work, who went at it with their usual energy and a rare liberality; the *American Israelite* was their organ, and their advocate, their helpmate, and is today the only organ of American Judaism in this country, while all other Jewish organs are engaged either in local matters, or in defence of some peculiar system of foreign and outlandish orthodoxy or seek the glory to be known as the opponents of the *American Israelite*.

So American Judaism was built up as far as the press is concerned."

Surely in the history of journalism in America the name of Isaac Mayer Wise is entitled to rank with the great editors and leaders of thought.

CHAPTER XII

THE UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS

THE greatest achievements of Isaac Mayer Wise were the organization of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the founding of the Hebrew Union College.

In 1873, success finally crowned his work of more than a quarter of a century. Almost immediately after his arrival in this country he realized that the interests of Judaism in America could not be furthered unless there was a union of various congregations and an institution where young men could be educated for the ministry. In a previous chapter[1] of this book the story of the first steps taken for union in 1848–49 has been told. After that movement failed Wise was sorely disappointed, and for the time he discontinued his efforts for a union and a college, but it was impossible for him to remain inactive, and within a short time after the 1849 fiasco, he again began to agitate the question that was uppermost in his

[1] Chapter VI.

mind. In his famous call of 1848 he had written: "I will be silent about the casuistic theology and ask only the community at large, 'What will become of our synagogues: What of our youth?' You see we have no system for our worship nor for our ministry and schools, and we are, therefore, divided into as many fragments as there are congregations in America. It is lamentable, but true, that if we do not unite ourselves betimes to devise a practical system for the ministry and for religious education at large, if we do not care that educated men fill the pulpit and the schoolmaster's chair, . . . the house of the Lord will be desolate or nearly so, in less than ten years. . . . I proclaim before the world, before the present and the future that something must be done to defend and maintain our sacred faith. Nor is it too late. Everything can be done if we are united before God."

Within a few years thereafter he was pointing out almost weekly in the *Asmonean* the necessity of having educated men in the pulpit and of founding a college where English speaking rabbis could be educated. On August 19, 1853, he published in the *Asmonean* his "Plan for an American Hebrew College." Excerpts from this article appear in Chapter IX of this book.



ISAAC M. WISE

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When he received a call from Cincinnati in the fall of 1853, he accepted principally because he saw an opportunity in the growing West of realizing his dream of a college, as is shown by his letter of acceptance: "I am a friend of bold plans and grand schemes, therefore I entertain the hope that the Talmud Yelodim Institute will in a few years realize my fervent wish of a Hebrew College . . . as I have frequently uttered the idea in the *Asmonean.*" Within three months after his arrival in Cincinnati the *Israelite* was published and the campaign for a college was launched once more.

In the second issue of the *Israelite*, July 21, 1854,[1] under the head, "What Should Be Done," attention is called to the lack of schools and textbooks. "All these difficulties could be overcome by a Union of the American Judaic Congregations." The following week the editor wrote: "We ought to be American Israelites, *i. e.*, American as men and citizens, and Israelites in our religion. . . . The Israelite is an American as soon as he enjoys the privileges which our Constitution guarantees to the citizen. . . . Let us educate our ministers here in our own college, and we will soon have American ministers, American congregations,

[1] Vol. i., No. 2.

and an American Union of Israelites for religious and charitable institutions. Let us have American trained leaders, and they will educate for us American citizens."

In October, 1854, Wise proposed a plan to establish a Zion College, and he advocated the organization throughout the country of Zion collegiate associations which should contribute to the support of that college. In Cincinnati an association of three hundred members was established, and Louisville, where Wise had lectured, also formed such an organization. Later similar societies were formed in New York, Cleveland, and Baltimore. This project, however, met with little support outside of Cincinnati. In the spring of 1855, the *Asmonean*, commenting upon the plan said: "We hope that our children will at no distant day see an Israelite college in every state of the Union." Dr. Wise replied in the *Israelite* of March 23, 1855,[1] writing: "We hope we shall at no great distant day see one grand and complete Israelite college for all states of the Union. Many petty institutions might flourish in this country, but a university worthy of the talents, lofty conceptions, and practical sense of the Jewish mind requires the support of all. As long as we have

[1] Vol. i., No. 37.

no grounds to shout glory for the privileged of New York, we go in for Cincinnati on account of its central location, and the readiness of our brethren to make great sacrifices for this national cause, and whenever we shall be convinced that New York is the place for it, we shall advocate such a conviction."

In the fall of 1855 Zion College, supported by associations organized for that purpose, was opened with fourteen students, two of whom were Christians. The institution had three paid teachers and two volunteer professors, Lilienthal and Wise. The opening of the college was celebrated by a banquet at which the Governor-elect of the State, Salmon P. Chase, afterwards Chief-Justice of the U. S. Supreme Court, spoke. But as the institution received little support outside of Cincinnati it was soon discontinued. Wise believed that if he had made an effort to gain support for this college in the West and South, rather than in the East, he would have succeeded, and twenty years later this plan was pursued.

During the spring and summer of 1855, Wise advocated the holding of a conference composed of rabbis and laymen, and in the *Israelite* of August 10, 1855, appears a call signed by nine rabbis for such a conference to be held at Cleve-

land, on October 17, 1855, to deliberate, among other matters, upon the articles of Union of American Israelites, and a plan for scholastic education.

This conference did not succeed in establishing the desired union, and its work, which will be considered more in detail in a later chapter, widened the breach between the Jewish radicalism, orthodoxy, and reform between the East and the West. Notwithstanding the second failure for union, Wise continued his agitation for union. On January 4, 1856,[1] he writes: "We must have a union at any risk or sacrifice, principles excepted. This should be the watchword of every right-minded Israelite. We are almost the first generation of Israel in America. We must prepare for the future of our faith. There rests upon our shoulders the future development of Judaism in this country. . . . We must have a university in which our national literature has a seat and a voice. . . . Must not we, as well at least as the other religious denominations, also establish and support a seat of learning? . . . Our national literature, the richest bequest of antiquity, the only oasis in the boundless desert of the Middle Ages, the foundation of all laws, ethics, and religion

[1] *Israelite*, vol. ii., No. 26.

of the civilized world, . . our national literature should have no home in this land of the free? Let him say 'no' who can. We shall say 'yes' to the end of our days. . . . We must have a place to teach or to examine our teachers, ministers, and rabbis that the outrageous imposition now practised on congregations be forever stopped. Whoever chooses, is a minister, wears a white handkerchief around his neck, styles himself a reverend, makes laws, establishes customs, is an authority, and severs congregations from each other. Knowledge or no knowledge, talent or none, piety or hypocrisy, this is not the question; the congregation stands in need of a minister or teacher; one comes, offers his services, pleases the leading men or ladies, and he is the long-expected Messiah. This must have an end if Judaism is not to be buried under the ruins which they heap upon it. To effect these aims we must have a union. The different parties, representing different theories, must recognize each other as Jews upon a firm basis, must have confidence in each other. . . . Jealousy, suspicion, and selfishness must fall to rise no more. Union and fraternity must unfurl their glorious banner to unite under it the sons and daughters of Israel. . . . Such were the ideas leading to the Cleveland conference. Therefore,

they laid down the articles of union, which, when properly understood, no Jew pretending to abide within the pale of Judaism will or can reject. The day is not far distant when every pious and intelligent Israelite will be obliged to confess 'The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner.' . . . Ill-fated Germany and the neglected synagogue of England assign the fate of Judaism to petty tyrants, the chief rabbis, who, backed by their respective governments, have, it is true, inflicted many a wound on Israel's faith, still have preserved it intact, protected it against the horror of disunion to an alarming extent. In America, thank God, we have no chief rabbis, no religious despotism, and none to apprehend. Here our union must be preserved by a republican body, a synod consisting of ministers and delegates elected by the congregations. . . ."

On October 31, 1856,[1] in an editorial, "Our Protest," Wise writes: "As we with heart and soul protest against radicalism, so we most emphatically do against the practice of American congregations in appointing ministers of congregations who have not the least knowledge nor the remotest comprehension of Jewish theology. . . . We want men of knowledge who know our creed

[1] *Israelite*, vol. iii., No. 7.

and our literature, who know it from its primitive sources and are capable of expounding it. The preservation of Israel's religion in this country; the mission of our nation; the will of God requires this protest from our hands.

"But in order to effect this necessary reform three things are requisite: (1) The condition of the ministers must be improved decidedly and radically; (2) We must at present get ministers from Europe; (3) We must establish a theological seminary. This, and only this, is the remedy."

In October, 1856, Dr. Merzbacher, of New York, one of the few learned and progressive rabbis in the country, and a friend and supporter of Dr. Wise, died. In the November 7, 1856,[1] issue, in an editorial, "Dr. Merzbacher's Death and the Ideas it Suggests," Wise wrote: "We have no school to educate the champions of Israel, and no desire to establish one. We have plenty of money to spend for any and every article of luxury. We are rich, very rich, make plenty of money. But Judaism, the Synagogue, the future of our great cause, our mission among the nations, the honour and position of Israel's religion,—let us be silent, dumb with shame and blush. . . . With pain-stricken heart we look into future days and see

[1] *Israelite*, vol. iii., No. 18.

angels weeping around the coffin of American Judaism, because none consoled her of all her friends. The indifferent look on with indifference; I cannot. Had I the power of thunder, I would cry my pain in every heart until they awake and act in behalf of God and Israel." So week after week through the coming decades the Thorlike editorials continued to appear. The following are extracts from the most powerful editorials on this subject: In the November 26, 1858,[1] issue, under the head, "The Education of Rabbis and Teachers," he writes: "It is admitted on all hands that unless we educate young men for the office of rabbis and teachers, Judaism in the next generation will retrogade. . . . It is a settled fact, however, that the next generation of American Israelites will speak neither German nor French as the usual vehicles to express their thought; they will be American in views, principles, and habits and will speak English. England educates no rabbis, hence in the next generation the synagogue will be without a rabbi, and the schools without teachers. Our cause in America requires American rabbis and teachers with American principles and eloquence, who are thoroughly acquainted with our mode of thinking and believing, our sentiments

[1] *Israelite*, vol. v., No. 21.

and convictions as they are to inculcate God's words in American hearts; therefore we must educate American rabbis and teachers. . . . All the flourishing establishments in this country are supported by the state, the church, or other corporate body. . . . The experiment made with Zion College Association proves practically that the scheme was impracticable, hence the basis of that scheme can not be tried a second time. We wish those of our friends who are better financiers than we are (this is our weakest point) would propose a plan to carry the above design into practice. . . . It is every Israelite's solemn duty to take this matter into serious consideration. Something must be done. This is quite clear to almost every impartial man. What and how it is to be done best is the question we propose to the public and to our humble self. Let us not forget to reflect on the subject."

And he took good care that no one should forget to consider the question. In the April 29, 1859,[1] issue he suggested that every congregation should collect fifty cents per capita for the creation of a fund to enable young American Jewish scholars to pursue their theological studies abroad. On March 9, 1860,[2] in an editorial, "Remember This,"

[1] *Israelite*, vol. v., No. 43. [2] *Ibid.*, vol. vi., p. 284.

he calls attention to the great scholars Judaism produced, Maimon, Spinoza, Mendelssohn, Boerne, Heine, and adds: "We have one National literature. This is the basis and cause of our oneness. Therefore, the knowledge of this, our literature, and the united desire to inquire after the truth, is not only our private duty and satisfaction, is not only for us and our children, for us and our neighbours, it is the glorious bond of Israel's union all over the earth, the earthly representative of God enthroned among Israel.

"If Israel's sacred inheritance should be preserved intact, we must unitedly, and all of us, support and preserve our synagogues, schools, and literature, and truth must be the main object of these institutions."

On November 2, 1860,[1] in an editorial, "The College," he states that he had completed arrangements for the opening of a college in September, 1861. There were to be three departments, Hebrew, Classical, and Commercial. Then came the great Civil War and all plans came to naught. Meanwhile the Jews were being treated with disdain, and there were few to resent insults. The *Israelite* of November 19, 1862,[2] insisted that the fault lay in the lack of knowledge of Judaism and

[1] *Israelite*, vol. vii., page 140. [2] Vol. ix ., p. 188.

English. "This can be remedied only in one way, by a college of our own, a college . . . where Judaism is taught from its original sources. . . . 'Here we are again on our old hobby horse,' our opponents will say, but we mean to ride it until we are released by a better labourer; we shall never cease to cry aloud 'In the Wilderness prepare the way of the Lord.' . . . As long as we must import our ministers and writers, we will be orphans in America, and as long as we have no college of our own, where Judaism is a branch of study, we cannot expect ministers and writers for our cause. Here is the old advice renewed because we know no better. If our opponents want to silence us let them furnish us with the means to establish a college on our plan, and we shall molest them no more. Our time and energy shall be devoted to education of worthy champions of light and truth, disciples of science and pillars of our cause."

In 1863, Wise became convinced that a college for the education of rabbis could not be established until he had succeeded in effecting a union of congregations to support such an institution. During the next decade the editorials treat of the necessity for such a union. On August 14, 1863,[1] in an

[1] Vol. x., No. 7.

editorial, "To the Israelites of the West," he wrote: "In the East reform is an object *per se*, with us it is secondary; we want reforms in order to endear and preserve our religion, therefore we ask the question, what benefit is this or that reform to our sacred cause; they want reform *per se*, and ask only the question how will this or that reform be liked. Here is a difference of principle of which practical results speak. The Eastern reformers are theoretical, we are practical; they are negative, we are positive; they consider themselves wiser and more learned and more respectable than we are, that is, the bulk of the people, and keep aloof; we are democratic in our religious feelings. Nothing can be more desirable than a union of synagogues. The future greatness of Judaism in America depends upon the union of congregations. We must be united in form of worship in order to have no element of discord among us. . . . Hitherto all attempts at union were frustrated by the reform leaders of the East. The proposition of having one college for all of us was defeated in the East.

"The attempt to establish a synod, the surer safeguard of union, was killed in the East. The humble essay of one prayer-book for all was denounced, attacked, condemned, and everything else, again in the East. Therefore, we have come

to the conclusion that it is impossible almost to effect a union with our Eastern contemporaries. But a union we must have, based upon the progressive principles of reform. We must unite the congregations of the Mississippi valley in order to do the work here, if we can not do it all over the country. . . .

"We must have a college . . . our strength lies in union and progress. . . . You have established congregations and support them well. Now is the time to unite them for grand purposes." At this time he predicted that the union of congregations would be effected within the next quarter of a century.

In June, 1865, Wise appeared before the New York Board of Delegates[1] for the purpose of inducing that body to take steps to found a college, but he was unsuccessful. On March 2, 1866,[2] the *Israelite* published an article of Mr. A. Cohen, of Chicago, in which it was suggested that every American Israelite over twenty-one years of age should contribute one dollar annually for the purpose of establishing a college. In the *Israelite*

[1] This was organized in 1858 after the Mortara boy abduction occurred, to secure and maintain Jewish civil and religious rights at home and abroad. It became a part of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations in 1878.

[2] Vol. xii., p. 276.

of the following week it was said, in commending this scheme, that every Hebrew congregation should enact and enforce two laws: (1) Every member of the congregation should pay annually one dollar to a college fund; (2) Every congregation should appoint a committee to collect one dollar from non-members for the same purpose. Here we already see the scheme which afterwards became a part of the constitution of the Union. The Independent Order of Bene B'rith (Sons of the Covenant) were urged to work for a college; about the same time the Emanuel Theological Association of New York resolved to establish "The American Hebrew College of the City of New York." In an editorial, "Better Two than One," the *Israelite* of February 16, 1867,[1] said: "We hope our brethren all over the land will take this matter into serious consideration. . . . Words are not wanted; deeds are required. Let none forget deeds are required. Let the Bene B'rith lodges work on with renewed energy and carry out their laudable enterprise. . . . Let the New York Association do the same and succeed equally as well. Both intend to do good. May God bless them both. Both work to the same end and if both succeed, they may finally merge into

[1] Vol. xiii., No. 32.

one, or if the worst should come to pass, we will have two colleges. Better two than one."

On March 5, 1869,[1] in an editorial, "Our American Israel," the editor writes: "For a long, probably too long a time, we have observed a silence on all practical questions concerning the American Israel. But we feel it our solemn duty to speak once more. . . . You must act and speak and demonstrate that you are, what you are, and where you are. You must meet in annual conference if you have nothing else to discuss to speak out annually in clear terms that you have a standpoint and are ready to defend it. . . . Numerous indeed are the topics which require public discussion and united action. In twenty years or less, four-fifths of the American Israelites will not understand much more German than French; but they will have to import preachers and teachers from Europe as they do now, because no American Israelites study theology. Why do they not? Why have hitherto all attempts failed to build up a seminary and provide it with students? Is it the money, the managers, or the students that are scarce? We must know where the fault lies and we must remove the obstacles. If we do not, the American Temple will, in twenty

[1] *Israelite*, vol. xv., No. 35.

years, be an outlandish institution to which passing men and women will say 'Here my father and mother used to worship. . . .'

"We must have American preachers and teachers, cost what it may. We must have them as early as possible, if we have soul enough to love and heart enough to support our cause. We want concert of action and a union of many, many purses, and the balance will come itself."

During all these years not a word of encouragement came out of the East. In June, 1869, the Revs. Drs. S. Adler and David Einhorn, of New York, called a meeting of rabbis of the progressive school to discuss the principles of a new form of public worship and other religious questions, especially the laws of marriage and divorce.

Wise did not consider this call an opposition move to the conference which was being advocated almost weekly by him. Nevertheless, he went to the meeting in Philadelphia in November, 1869, for the sole purpose of proposing steps for his cherished union.[1] His proposition was rejected. Wise and Lilienthal, however, were appointed a committee to make suitable arrangements for the next conference, and to issue a call for ministers only who favoured reform.

[1] *Israelite*, vol. xxx., No. 34.

Before the meeting of the next conference, which was held in Cincinnati, Rabbis Wise, Lilienthal, Kleeberg, and Mayer, who had been at work revising the Minhag America, called a meeting of all interested in that work, to be held at Cleveland in July, 1870, and after adopting certain important changes in the ritual the conference adjourned to meet the following October in New York. Nothing was accomplished at the New York meeting, and all attempts to conciliate the New York rabbis, especially Einhorn, failed.

Nearly all of the members of the Philadelphia conference were greatly incensed at Wise because of his action in reference to the Minhag America at the Cleveland and New York meetings, and published protests against him, declaring over their signatures that they would have nothing further to do with him. The *Jewish Times*, of New York, was especially abusive. The attitude of the Eastern rabbis and the billingsgate of the Eastern Jewish press did not deter Wise from pursuing his campaign for a union and a college.

In February, 1870,[1] under the title, "Education for the Pulpit," the *Israelite* used these prophetic words: "If we want a seminary we must have the convention to establish and support it. . . .

[1] *Israelite*, vol. xvi., No. 34.

As long as the congregations do not meet in convention and adopt measures and have them carried out by their executive committees, the community at large will take no interest in the matter."

During the latter part of 1870, the *Israelite's* editorials became stronger and stronger, and the editor seemed to appreciate the fact that no argument could be too extreme. On October 24, 1870,[1] the *Israelite* printed an editorial, "Sell Out or Work": "Let us give up these synagogues and temples. Let us sell them and either divide the proceeds or donate them to some charitable purpose. What! Sell our magnificent synagogues? Dispose of our gorgeous temples? Yes, you had better sell them. In twenty years, if you go on as you do now, there will be no use for them. A synagogue without a preacher, without a good and eloquent preacher, is of very little use. In twenty years an American Jew will speak English only as a rule. We will have no English preachers. England educates none. America educates none. No preachers will be equivalent to no synagogues and no temples. In twenty years you will need none. You had better sell them at your first best chance. Therefore, sell out in time or go to

[1] Vol. xvii., No. 16.

work to educate eloquent ministers for the American Jewish pulpit."

On December 9, 1870,[1] the *Israelite* announced that Mr. Henry Adler, of Lawrenceburg, Indiana, had consented to give $10,000 to Cincinnati Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Dr. Wise) for the establishment of a college, thereby "rendering his name immortal in the history of American Judaism."

In April, 1871, Wise, Lilienthal, and Cohen issued a call for a conference. At the conference, of which Rev. Dr. Huebsch, of New York, presided, nineteen rabbis were present, representing congregations from the states of Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, New York, Kentucky, Missouri, Louisiana, Illinois, Kansas, and Wisconsin. This conference adopted resolutions proposed by Wise calling upon the congregation to form a Hebrew Congregational Union, "with the purpose to advance the union of Israel, to establish a scholastic institution and a library appertaining thereto for the education of rabbis, preachers, and teachers of religion, to provide a cheap edition of English Bibles. . . . And provided that a meeting should be held whenever twenty congregations representing two thousand members appointed delegates." Unfortunately, one irresponsible mem-

[1] Vol. xvii., No. 24.

ber of the conference, Dr. Mayer, of Cleveland, during a debate stated that as far as he was concerned he did not believe in a Personal God. All the members of the conference were fully aware of Mayer's radicalism and irresponsibility, and paid no attention to his remarks, and the press accounts of the following day took no notice of the incident. However, in the papers of the second day following there appeared an account under the sensational heading, "Rabbis do not believe in a Personal God."

After the adjournment of the conference the Eastern rabbis, particularly Einhorn and Adler, of New York, and Hirsch, of Philadelphia, seized upon this "Personal God" incident to decry the work of the conference, especially the effort for union and the establishment of a college. A protest signed by nearly all the Eastern rabbis appeared in the *Jewish Times*, of New York, in the issue of June 30, 1871,[1] and this protest and the abuse of Wise, who was as innocent as Blaine was at the time of the Burchard "Rum, Romanism, and Rebellion" speech in 1884, again alienated the support of the Eastern congregations and widened the breach between the forces of the Eastern and Western Judaism.

[1] Vol. iii., No. 18.

This fresh attack in the East had one decided effect upon Wise and the friends of union. They realized that henceforth nothing could be expected from the East. "This (attack) forced me to the conclusion," writes Wise, "that the rabbis will never build a union, they will never build up a college, they will never be able to construct an American Judaism. . . ."

Not at all discouraged by this new rebuff, Wise kept up his campaign for a union of congregations. On September 23, 1871, Wise's congregation, Bene Yeshurun, decided to send delegates to such a convention whenever twenty congregations with a total of two thousand members should appoint delegates. A few congregations joined in this movement, but the time was not yet ripe for the realization of his hope. Wise continued to advocate union, to urge men and congregations everywhere to work. In October, 1872, congregation Bene Yeshurun, of Cincinnati, acting upon suggestion of its president, M. Loth, adopted a resolution requesting sister congregations of Cincinnati to appoint a committee to consider the calling of a general conference of all congregations of the West, South, and South-west, for the purpose of forming a union of congregations to establish a Jewish Theological Faculty. On March 30, 1873,

delegates from all the Cincinnati congregations met and organized by electing Julius Freiberg, Chairman, and Lipman Levy, Secretary.

Wise published in the *Israelite* of April 4, 1873,[1] an editorial, "It is Coming," in which he says: "It is coming after all, the college, seminary, theological faculty, or whatever it may be named, and the union of American Hebrew congregations. . . . A committee has been appointed to prepare a call for a general convention. . . . Which congregation will stand back? Common sense suggests none. Experience, however, teaches that common sense does not always prevail while private views and notions are at work. . . . This or that body may stand back for a time, all reforms have met with opposition, but none will be able to resist the united actions of many for any length of time. . . ."

On May 18, 1873, the Cincinnati General Committee, "Resolved to issue a call to all Congregations of the West and South for a congregational convention to form a 'Union of Congregations' under whose auspices a 'Jewish Theological Institute' shall be established and other measures adopted, which will advance the prosperity of our religion."

[1] Vol. xx., No. 14.

The *Israelite* from May to July, 1873, devotes its editorials to the discussion of plans to be laid before the convention.

On June 20, 1873,[1] under the title "The Main Question," Wise reviews the history of Judaism in America, pointing out that in 1846 there were only four congregations of reform tendencies in America, viz., one each in Charleston, S. C., Baltimore, New York, and Albany. "To intelligent men," he wrote, "it appeared clearly impossible to build up Judaism in America . . . without passing through a thorough refining process of reform. Here the main trouble began. . . . None of the parties thought it possible to yield. . . . The reformers maintained Judaism could not exist here without going through a renovating reform, and the orthodox maintained reform Judaism is none at all. You must be orthodox or nothing. So the struggle began and was continued with considerable feeling on both sides. . . . Reform and orthodox congregations would not and could not co-operate. In the course of time the cause of reform was triumphant, and especially in the West, North, and South, where the young and rising communities started out at once on reform principles, and the older ones were obliged to follow

[1] *Israelite*, vol. xx., No. 25.

the example set by congregation Bene Yeshurun, of Cincinnati, so that our orthodox congregations became few and far apart, by no means fanatical. . . .

"Thus, the nugatory effect of the reform movement on the united action by the Hebrew congregations would have been overcome long ago if it had not been for our 'great men.' History teaches us that whenever an old system is set aside by popular movement to bring about a new one a large number of 'great men' are called into existence. . . . These 'great men' frequently become a great plague among the community for the time being, because their disputes are the disturbing element. . . . Hitherto American Judaism has not been able to get over the effect of 'great men's' disputes and quarrels. . . . How shall we get over them, is a question which has engaged our attention for a long time, and here is the result of our reflection. We have grown from fifty to two hundred congregations in a quarter of a century. . . . Are we or are we not able to take care of our affairs without the lead of our 'great men'? If we are, let us do it in God's name. Let us shelve a few dozen of 'great men' till our affairs are settled, and then let them call again. In order to get over them we must do a little while without them.

"This is the question now before the congregations, Are we sufficiently advanced to take care of our own affairs? Are we independent and intelligent enough to do it? . . . If we are minors no longer, if the work and combat of a quarter of a century have educated and trained us up to the point of independence and wise judgment, then in God's name let us unite and do our work to the best of our ability. July 8th this question will be decided for the present.

"Our confidence in the masses was always strong and invincible. Therefore, we started at the very first conference in Cleveland with the idea of a union of congregations by chosen representatives. But it was defeated in 1856. We reiterated it in the Philadelphia conference (1869) and it was defeated on the spot. Again we brought it up in the Cincinnati conference (1871) and it failed again, always by the particular work of our 'great men.' Now the question is before the congregations in an entirely new shape. It comes as a proposition of sixty Cincinnatians representing five congregations. No congregation can ignore it without loading upon itself the blame of many of its members. None can reject it without giving its reasons to the world why this or that body refuses to co-oper-

ate with its sister congregations in the great work of union. . . .

"Now the question will be decided, Are we ripe for the great work, or are we to remain minors a little while longer until we can pick up courage enough to go and do that which should be done, that which it is our duty before God and man? Our confidence is unshaken. We hope. We wait impatiently, because we know on the eighth of July Judaism can open a new era of its history in America, or declare its incompetency, to be dragged along many a year to come."

On July 8, 1873, there met at Cincinnati in convention delegates from thirty-four congregations, who organized The Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the main purpose of which was "to establish a Hebrew Theological College to preserve Judaism intact, to bequeath it in its purity and sublimity to posterity, to Israel united and fraternized, to establish, sustain, and govern a seat of learning, for Israel's religion and learning."

While Wise was working in season and out of season to bring about union, the Eastern Jewish press was accusing him of disunion, and when, despite the opposition of the East and its aloofness, the union was formed, the *Jewish Times*, on

July 25, 1873,[1] said: "The whole movement which, we are sorry to say, is on a level with all the plans and schemes which were set on foot by Dr. Wise. They can not rise above . . . the commonplace. And this last product of his feeble brain will fare no better; it will also end in dust and smoke. . . .

"And it matters but little to him (Wise) what the result of these fanfaronades are; they help to spread his name and fame; for all we know, if he lives long enough, he will, with such undaunted energy as he possesses, yet succeed in being made the Jewish Archbishop of American Israel. . . . But how does the thing stand in reality? What is accomplished? A sectional division is created which will retard the work of genuine union for years to come. . . . None of the representatives are so unsophisticated as to believe that Eastern congregations will consent to join them in something in which they had no voice, where their advice and co-operation had been rejected by a distant statement that only Southern and Western congregations were asked to attend.

"Everyone not blinded by prejudice or partisanship must know that the largest number of Israelites are found in the East and North, that the most prominent scientific minds are ministers

[1] Vol. v., No. 22.

of Jewish congregations in the East; that the greatest wealth exists there, and that a 'union' of American congregations of which the congregations of New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and other cities, are left out, is a nonentity, and that such a gigantic enterprise as the establishment of a Jewish high school can, if at all, be supported only by united shoulders of all congregations. . . .

"Let us take the most favourable average of one hundred members each (to each congregation that joined) and we have three thousand individual members of the union. They are to pay one dollar a year per member, and we have the magnificent sum of three thousand dollars with which this Wise College is to be maintained.

"What a farce. Is it not bringing ridicule upon the effort and upon Judaism by thus exposing ourselves to the eyes of the world? . . . Why, it ($3000 per annum) would not suffice to pay the salary of a single professor."

Prophecies such as these are dangerous. Today the Union of American Hebrew Congregations consists of 191 congregations, having a combined membership of 21,706. The Hebrew Union College was established by this union, and of 153 living graduates[1] there are twenty-five occupying

[1] This does not include the 1916 class of twelve.

the leading pulpits of New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore, Albany, Rochester, Brooklyn, New Haven, and other Eastern cities. The pulpits of Einhorn, Adler, Hirsch, Morais, Jastrow, and other rabbis who opposed Wise, and tried to prevent the organization of the union and the founding of the college, are filled by graduates of "Wise's College." Wise not only wrote for the union, but he travelled throughout the land and spoke for the union. In his article on, "Plan for American Hebrew College," printed in the *Asmonean* of August 19, 1853, he wrote: "We would even undertake to travel and see the principal congregations of the country on that subject if the desirable end could be reached."

During the years 1855 to 1873 Wise had visited nearly all the large cities of the country between the Missouri and the Atlantic coast, and had lectured and preached frequently to large audiences. He likewise visited the growing communities of the West, South, and North-west, where he laid corner-stones for new synagogues, dedicated completed ones, and instituted Bene B'rith lodges. During that period no rabbi in this country was better known and none exerted more influence. His name then was already a household word in American Israel. In 1855 he visited Louisville,

Cleveland, Wheeling, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, and Albany; in 1856, Indianapolis, Terre Haute, Vincennes, St. Louis, Quincy, Keokuk, Davenport, Rock Island, Ottawa, La Salle, Peoria, Chicago, Milwaukee, and Detroit in the West, and New York, Philadelphia, and Boston in the East. In 1857 and 1858, Cleveland, Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, and Albany. In 1859 Wise made a second trip West, visiting Indianapolis, Lafayette, Fort Wayne, Chicago, and Milwaukee. In 1860 he visited Piqua, Columbus, Cleveland, Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Albany, New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore. Speaking of this 1860 trip he writes in the *Israelite* of August 31, 1860[1]: "We have seen over ten thousand people in the different synagogues and halls, and made the acquaintance of thousands we had not the pleasure of knowing before. . . . It is the principle expounded and defended that attracts the multitudes; it is the system that we expound that has so many friends, and even admirers. . . ." In 1863, Washington; in 1864, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, Chicago, and Detroit; 1865, Hartford, Connecticut; 1867, Cleveland, Buffalo, Rochester, Albany, New York and Newark, Detroit, Lafayette. In

[1] Vol. vii., No. 9.

1869, Nashville, Chattanooga, Atlanta, Augusta, Charleston, and also Philadelphia and New York. It was on this Southern trip that he realized the importance of the building of the Cincinnati Southern Railroad which was then being agitated. The following account of his trip, which appears in the *Israelite* of December 3, 1869,[1] shows how practical a man he was: "Nine o'clock Monday morning I had just got my trunk. I took the train for Chattanooga. The railroad reminds me of the universal complaints of all the merchants in Nashville and southward that they can not get goods from north of the Ohio in less than six weeks. The same complaint all the way down. I was told in Atlanta and Augusta, Ga., that goods from New York are received three weeks before they can be gotten from Cincinnati. If Cincinnati can not get direct connection with Atlanta, Ga., *via* Chattanooga, with Charleston, S. C., *via* Knoxville, and with Nashville direct, it must gradually lose its trade in that direction. With these connections, however, Nashville can be reached in twelve hours, Atlanta in twenty hours, Charleston and Savannah in twenty-five hours to thirty hours, and the whole central region opened to the manufactures and commerce

[1] Vol. xvi., No. 22.

of Cincinnati. This ought to be done in as short a time as possible if Cincinnati manufacturers and merchants mean to profit by its geographical position."

In 1870 he attended the meetings at Cleveland and New York, and in 1871 visited the East again, delivering his lectures on the "Origin of Christianity." In 1872 he was at Easton, Scranton, and Titusville, Pennsylvania, and Hartford, Connecticut.

It was during this time that Drs. Einhorn and Hirsch issued a protest against Wise, because he held that according to Jewish law a rabbi could lawfully perform the marriage ceremony between a man and the widow of his deceased brother even where there were living children. Notwithstanding the protest and the bitter attack made on him, he treated the matter lightly. In the *Israelite* of July 19, 1872,[1] he writes: "Dr. Einhorn on that occasion was so very charitable and humble as to go and see the president of our congregation, and in a very trusting manner give him to understand how welcome it would be to the Almighty's special policeman if that Wise could be got out of the way, in a nice, lawful, and decent manner, of course. We were quite surprised to

[1] Vol. xix., No. 3.

learn that Dr. Einhorn took such a deep interest in our welfare. So were some other people. But what good has it done? . . . Since that time Wise has been called to Easton, Scranton, and Titusville, Pennsylvania, to Hartford, Connecticut, right at the door of New York and Philadelphia to speak to and for our people, and nobody thought of that protest and that special kindness of Dr. Einhorn. Nor did anybody think of sending such a call to any of the protesting rabbis or their adjutants. God bless them all, innocent and harmless people. There is no use telling people whom they should like to hear; who should enjoy their confidence, or upon whom they should bestow their affection. . . . Still if Dr. Hirsch should insist upon having us removed from office and curtailed in our public activities, as good-natured as we otherwise are, we will be most likely tempted by Satan to revenge, and our revenge will be the acceptance of a pulpit in New York, or, if the Doctor insists upon it, in Philadelphia. . . . If our colleagues in the East continue to overpower us with their peculiar demonstrations of piety and kind affections we hardly will be able to resist the temptation to be somewhere near them so that they need not send us their compliments a thousand miles over land. If one evening we should

determine upon such a course and the next morning telegraph our intention to some metropolitan friends, our benign colleagues on the seashore will have a fine opportunity to try and prevent the calamity of a new chapter in the history of American Judaism being opened. . . ."[1]

In July, 1873, Wise, without settling in the East, after a persistent and uncompromising struggle of more than a quarter of a century, succeeded in overcoming all the great obstacles that had been placed in his path by the Eastern radical and orthodox rabbis.

Truly, and with pride, he writes in the *Israelite* of July 18, 1873,[2] an editorial: "A new Chapter in the History of American Israel," in which he said: "'For a child was born unto us and the dominion shall be upon his shoulder.' On the eighth, ninth, and tenth days of July, 1873, in the convention held in Cincinnati, the youngest child of Israel was born, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations was organized, constituted, and established. . . . The child was born in peace, brotherly love, and beautiful harmony. . . . The new chapter in our history begins with peace and sends forth the ancient salutation Shalom Alechem, 'peace to all of you.' . . .

[1] See *supra*, p. 174.

[2] Vol. xxi., No. 3.

"The first object of this union is the Hebrew College. It proposes first of all things to establish a seat of learning for Hebrew literature. . . . but the first thing must come first."

CHAPTER XIII

THE HEBREW UNION COLLEGE

THE first council of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations met at Cleveland, Ohio, in July, 1874. At this council fifty-five congregations were represented by delegates, and by a unanimous vote it was decided to establish a theological college to be known as the Hebrew Union College. By common consent the college was located at Cincinnati, and Isaac Mayer Wise was chosen its first president. Wise had always been of the opinion that a theological seminary must be located in a city where there existed a secular college or university so that the rabbinical students could attend both institutions simultaneously. In 1859 Andrew McMicken died in Cincinnati, and by his will devised to the City of Cincinnati his large estate to establish a college for white boys and girls. Owing to this munificent gift, Wise believed he could open his college in the beginning of the decade of 1860; the Civil War, and the

litigation over the McMicken bequest, however, prevented this. After the close of the war the campaign for union described in the last chapter began in earnest, and in 1873, when the University of Cincinnati, of which the academic department was McMicken College, was opened, it was self-evident that any theological school that the Union of American Hebrew Congregations should establish would be located in Cincinnati.

At the Cleveland council of the Union, a Board of Governors was elected in whose charge the college was placed. The Board of Governors met soon thereafter and elected Wise the first president of the college. Speaking of his election, Wise wrote in the *American Israelite* of September 3, 1875[1]: "We deem it our duty to speak a few words for the president-elect, and may say that he considers it the highest honour which could have been conferred upon him. Neither a seat in the Senate of the United States, nor the office of Chief Justice appears to him as responsible and honourable a position as the presidency of the Hebrew Union College, where the finest opportunity is offered to contribute largely to the education of the young people of our country; to lay a solid foundation to the future greatness of American Judaism, and

[1] Vol. xxv., No. 9.

to promulgate Hebrew learning, to raise high the moral and intellectual standard of Judaism. . . . An arduous task has been imposed on him with this honour. It is no small enterprise to organize and build up a seat of learning for the education of the rising and the coming generations. This will take more work than is commonly supposed, and can be successfully accomplished only by the earnest and unanimous support of the Board of Governors, faculty, and the executive committee of the union, the confidence and hearty support of our co-religionists in general, upon whom he relies, to all of whom he sends fraternal greetings with the solemn promise always to do his duty fully to the best of his knowledge and ability. It will be the object of his life and happiness to afford the opportunity to the young Israelites of our country to acquire an academical and enlightened education, to take out into practical life the wisdom and truth amassed in the treasures of Israel's rich literature."

He fully realized the magnitude of the task before him. The union was small and young, the Eastern congregations, which were composed of the wealthiest Jews in the country, were opposed to it and to him. In the same article just quoted from, he writes: "Isaac M. Wise has many and

fierce opponents. He has projected and worked too much not to have them. No public spirited man can ever escape them. But he has many more ardent and faithful friends, whose confidence he fully possesses and who are always ready to support him heartily. His opponents who were also opponents of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations will, of course, decry his election.

"In his official capacity he recognizes no opponents, no enemies, he will work for the benefit of all, and however humble an individual he may be, he will always be guided by the principle, 'The disciples of the sages augment the peace of the world.' He will have no isms and no schisms to impose, no sophistries to defend, no superstitions to advocate, no prejudices to foster; exactly in obedience to the outspoken will of the council and the union will he earnestly and steadily endeavour with the aid of a competent and distinguished faculty to open the treasures of Israel's literature to Jew and Gentile, reformer and orthodox in justice to all and in offence to none. . . . The indigent student will always find him ready to help. It will be his pride to be a parental friend to the intelligent youth of our country whose confidence he flatters himself to possess, and claims but one reward, success."

The first faculty consisted of Isaac Mayer Wise and Solomon Eppinger, and in 1876, Rev. Dr. Max Lilienthal, who had been the zealous supporter of Wise in his fight for the union and the college, joined the teaching staff. Of these three, Solomon Eppinger was the only one to receive any compensation, and that was small. The college was to consist of three departments, preparatory, Hebrew classical or collegiate, and rabbinical or graduate. The preparatory was open to students or graduates of high schools or colleges; the collegiate to graduates of the preparatory department and the students of any college or university, and the rabbinical department to graduates of the collegiate department.

The college was open not only to Israelites, but also to students of all denominations, and tuition was gratuitous. No one was to receive the title of rabbi who had not been graduated from a secular college or university of equal standing with the University of Cincinnati. The formal opening of the Hebrew Union College took place October 3, 1875, at the Plum Street Temple (Dr. Wise's temple). Addresses were made by the President of the Board of Governors, Bernhard Bettmann, the Rev. Drs. Sonnenschein, of St. Louis, and Lilienthal, of Cincinnati. When Wise was called

on to address the audience, he said[1]: "Little remains to be said after all the eloquent addresses, unless he should speak of the gladness and delight that he felt that at last, after twenty-five years of toil and struggle, this great project of a Hebrew College is being realized, but he feels incapable to do this well, he lacked words to do justice to his feelings."

The next day the first class of the college was opened in the vestry rooms of the Mound Street Temple, Eighth and Mound streets, with seventeen pupils. Of these, four completed their course in 1883, Israel Aaron, rabbi at Fort Wayne and Buffalo, now deceased; Henry Berkowitz, rabbi at Mobile, Ala., Kansas City, Mo., now rabbi of Rodef Shalom Congregation, Philadelphia; Joseph Krauskopf, rabbi at Kansas City, now of Keneseth Israel, Philadelphia, and David Philipson, rabbi at Baltimore, and now Lilienthal's successor in Cincinnati.

In 1876 the second class entered, and among its members who graduated in 1884 were Louis Grossmann, now Dr. Wise's successor at the Plum Street Temple; Rabbis Max Heller, of New Orleans, Joseph Stolz, of Chicago, and Joseph Silverman, of Temple Emanuel, New York City. So each

[1] *Israelite*, Oct. 3, 1875, vol. xxv., No. 14.

succeeding year during the ensuing twenty-five years of Wise's life new students entered the college.

The rabbinical course required eight years, four preparatory and four collegiate. In 1877 the growing college was removed from the Mound Street Temple to the larger vestry rooms of the Plum Street Temple. On April 24, 1881, a large double stone-front house on West Sixth Street was purchased and dedicated as a college building. At this dedication Wise said: "This is the first time in the history of our country that any house has been dedicated as this to higher Jewish learning in the double sense of the term by communication from teacher to students."

The college remained in this building until thirteen years after Wise's death, when, through the munificence of Jacob H. Schiff, of New York, Isaac W. Bernheim, of Louisville, Kentucky, Julius Rosenwald, of Chicago, and many others, the present stately college building and library, located on an eighteen-acre tract on Clifton Avenue overlooking the western part of Cincinnati, were dedicated with appropriate ceremonies. The dedicatory address was delivered by Rabbi Jonah B. Wise, of Portland, Oregon, the son of the founder.

The faculty was increased from time to time.

In 1879, Rabbi Moses Mielziner, the great Talmudist, joined the faculty, and soon gained the love and esteem of all the students by his gentle ways and his great learning. After Wise's death he was acting president for a short time. Wise and Mielziner gave the college the scholastic reputation it enjoyed in its early history.

Not only was a college to be established but also a library. The beginnings of the present library were small. In 1876 there were 247 volumes, mostly prayer-books. Every Israelite in the country thought he was conferring a favour on the college by sending a discarded and worn prayer-book. Year by year, however, the library increased in size and importance, and today the Hebrew Union College Library occupies a separate building, known as the Isaac W. Bernheim library building, and contains thirty-five thousand volumes and nine thousand pamphlets. It possesses one of the best and most valuable collections of Hebraica in the country. Wise insisted constantly upon the upbuilding of the library and was a generous donor of many valuable and rare books. The faculty, which, in 1875, was composed of two professors, had nine at the death of Wise.

In the preparation of a curriculum, Wise consulted with prominent rabbis, but reserved the

right to adopt such curriculum as he thought best. Dr. S. Wolfenstein, who for many years was the superintendent of the Jewish Orphan Asylum, of Cleveland, Ohio, recently wrote: "At the second council of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, held in July, 1874, at Cleveland, Ohio, Drs. Lilienthal and Wise and myself were appointed as a committee to prepare a curriculum of studies for the new rabbinical college. We met a consecutive number of Sundays at Cincinnati. . . . Our meetings were very animated as a rule. Lilienthal and myself agreeing and Wise opposing us. . . . It was on one of these occasions when Lilienthal, lighting a fresh cigar, broke out in a laugh, in which he liked to indulge so heartily, and turning to me he exclaimed: 'Wolfenstein, you are a fool and I am another. We quarrel with Wise and, nevertheless, he will do as he pleases.' He certainly was right. When I attended the college examinations in May or June, 1878, Rabbis Morais and Zirndorf were my colleagues. I did not find much of the program that we had prepared carried out. Wise had cut down the scientific and theoretic subjects, laying stress upon matters touching and pertaining to practical life. Most probably he was right."[1]

[1] Cleveland *Jewish Review and Observer*, Nov. 26, 1915.

No school can exist without students, and the first need of the new rabbinical college was students. As most of the applicants were unable to defray the expenses necessary for their support at Cincinnati, the college contributed liberally to their support. Thus the question of finance became at once a pressing one. Wise continued his campaign for the college and the union, and during the quarter of a century following the opening of the college he constantly dwelt upon the necessity of donations and bequests. Year by year the union increased very slowly. Donations and bequests likewise increased yearly, but during the lifetime of Wise, neither the college nor the union had sufficient funds for adequate support. During the first eight years of the college's existence Wise continued his travels in its interest, and in the summer of 1877 he made a trip to California, stopping at all the principal cities *en route*. Later he revisited the large cities of the East and Middle West.

To convince the Jews of America that the work of the college was worthy of their support, Wise decided to invite prominent rabbis from different cities to act yearly as a board of examiners. This was a master-stroke, and had the immediate effect of gaining friends and enthusiastic supporters

for the college everywhere. These examiners were both orthodox and reform rabbis and scholars of known ability. In 1877 the examiners were Drs. Sonnenschein, of St. Louis, and Mayer, of Pittsburgh; in 1878, Drs. Morais, of Philadelphia, Wolfenstein, of St. Louis, and Zindorf, of Detroit; in 1879, Drs. Huebsch of New York, Felsenthal, of Chicago, and Hahn, of Cleveland; in 1880, Drs. F. De Sola Mendes, of New York, Adler, of Chicago, and Sonnenschein, of St. Louis; in 1881, Drs. Samuel Hirsch, of Philadelphia, Goldammer, of Nashville, and Samfield, of Memphis; in 1882, Drs. Moses, of Louisville, Emil G. Hirsch, of Chicago, and Isaacs, of New York, and in 1883, the year the first class was graduated, Drs. Kohler, of New York, Szold, of Baltimore, and Jacobs, of Philadelphia.

These examiners in their reports, which are printed in the proceedings of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, certify to the proficiency of the students, and praise the work of both students and faculty. Between 1880 and 1883 the students of the upper classes of the college officiated during the great Jewish holydays in congregations that were without ministers, and gave satisfaction. This custom, which still exists, made the college quite popular throughout the country.

No large Eastern congregation joined the union until 1878, when both Temple Emanuel (Dr. Gottheil's congregation) of New York, and Beth El (Dr. Einhorn's congregation) became members, and both were represented in the Milwaukee council of 1878. At this meeting Mr. M. Ellinger, the editor of the New York *Jewish Times*, that had so frequently and maliciously abused Wise, represented Einhorn's congregation. Wise says: "On the strength of this fact (*i. e.*, Beth El joining the union) we shook hands with the gentleman (Ellinger) to bury the hatchet forever. We have done one another a great deal of mischief and might make up for it by doing a great deal of good by friendly relations."[1]

In July, 1883, ten years after the organization of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, and eight years after the opening of the college, the Union met in Cincinnati to celebrate its decennial, and the first ordination of rabbis in America. At this time the Union was composed of 128 congregations, and the council of that year was the largest representative body of Israelites that had ever up to that time assembled in America in the interest of Judaism and Jewish culture. The graduation exercises were held in Wise's Plum

[1] *Israelite*, vol. xxxi., No. 3, July, 1878.

Street Temple, and on that July evening, in 1883, when Wise conferred the rabbinical title on Israel Aaron, Henry Berkowitz, Joseph Krauskopf, and David Philipson, by impressing upon the forehead of each his kiss, it seemed that all opposition to the union and the college had disappeared.

But Wise was again to meet with bitter disappointment. The hospitable citizens of Cincinnati tendered the visiting delegates a large banquet which was attended by both orthodox and reform delegates. On this occasion certain dishes forbidden by the dietary laws observed by the orthodox were served. This incident was seized upon by the uncompromising opponents of the union and the college, and the college and its faculty were accused of heresy. Returning to their respective homes the orthodox delegates immediately began a vigorous campaign against all connected with the college and in general against reform Judaism, and many congregations resigned from the union, and for the time being the outlook was not promising. In 1885 Dr. Kohler, of New York, invited all reform rabbis to meet in conference at Pittsburgh. Wise was now confronted with the question whether he should attend this conference. He thus comments on the

call: "Should he or should he not go there? Should he or should he not maintain a sort of neutrality in the face of the combating parties? Is it fair, becoming, admirable, to keep aloof when matters so important to American Israelites are to be discussed?" After mature deliberation he resolved to go to Pittsburgh, and he did go, for the following reasons:

"Silence is a crime when speech on behalf of principles is necessary. Silence is a token of weakness and cowardice where principles are loudly assailed. Silence, when two systems of what are called reform and orthodoxy are placed face to face to justify their existence, would have been deemed equivalent to giving the lie to his life's work and career, a recantation of their underlying principles. He would not go to Canossa (New York), and went to Pittsburgh to fall as a man rather than to rise as a renegade. . . .

"Reform without freedom is about the same as Judaism without principles. Dr. Wise could only decide in favour of union and harmonious personal freedom, and so he resolved to go to Pittsburgh, and he did go to exercise the franchise of a freeman in the service of a holy cause.

"But then there was the consideration for the union and the college. Here Dr. Wise naturally

told himself that the same parties precisely now challenge the reform cause and men, and want us all to go to Canossa. So that these selfsame parties . . . are precisely the same parties that always and incessantly denounced, persecuted and . . . injured and undermined the union and the college. Nothing but animosity and restless opposition can be expected of them. On the other side is the young element to whom belongs the future, the progressive and enlightened element, and among those men the lifelong friends of the union and of the college. Ignoring them at this juncture would make no friends for these institutions on either side—the New York-Philadelphia conspiracy against them is there, and the reform element would only be offended by being ignored. Therefore, for the benefit of the union and the college, also, Dr. Wise resolved to go to Pittsburgh, and he did go. If no peace can be made with the Eastern conspirators let us have peace, union, and good-fellowship among ourselves.

"In the Pittsburgh conference nothing practical was done; a platform of principles was constructed on which all reformatory ideas, projects, and persons could stand and co-operate. . . .

"A peace on fundamental principles among the progressive teachers in American Israel was

attempted and secured. . . . It happened, however, that unreliable reporters spread accounts through the press, and before the conference was adjourned it was spread all over the land that it had abolished the Sinaic Sabbath, the Abrahamitic sign of the Covenant, that it denied revelation, prophecy, miracles, or whatever men ignorant of Jewish theology call the divinity of the Bible; not a word of which was true. . . . Capital was made of these reports by opponents of the union and the college. . . . There appeared again the old sophistry 'Dr. Wise is the Union, Dr. Wise is the College, Dr. Wise is a heretic. Kill them off, all of them.'"[1]

Within a year after the Pittsburgh conference the *American Hebrew*, of New York, the organ of Orthodox Judaism, attacked Dr. Wise as an heretic, and in the issue of February 26, 1886,[2] published an editorial, "The Need of the Seminary," in which it is said: "The *American Hebrew* supported the union and the union college until all hope of having Judaism taught in the college, and by the lives of the preceptors, became demonstrably vain. We have had to become reconciled to the necessity of starting a new institution free

[1] *Israelite*, vol. xxxiv., No. 39.
[2] Vol. xxvi., No. 3.

from the shadow of baneful influences which have perverted the Cincinnati institution."

The Jewish Theological Seminary of New York was shortly thereafter organized, but it did not thrive during Wise's lifetime, and even at this date few of its graduates occupy any prominent pulpits in America. Nevertheless, its organization and support by the East retarded the material progress of the Hebrew Union College.

The union steadily increased in strength, and as each succeeding class graduated from the college, the newly ordained rabbis spread the influence of the college throughout the country. Donations and bequests likewise increased, and had it not been for the large Russian Jewish immigration driven to this country by the barbaric persecution which required enormous sums for relief work, a permanent endowment might have been secured for the college during Wise's lifetime. With few exceptions, however, the Jews of America do not contribute liberally for religious education. They give large sums for charitable purposes, orphan asylums, hospitals, relief work of all kind, but they have not yet learned the art of endowing their educational institutions.

Frequently Wise offered to retire from the presidency of the college and the faculty, because

he felt his retirement might benefit the institution financially. It would have required, however, an endowment of at least $150,000 to replace him. From 1875 to 1879 he did not receive any compensation either as President or Professor of Theology and Philosophy. From December, 1879, to September, 1880, he received $83.33 a month as an allowance toward house rent, because at that time he removed to his country home and had to maintain a separate house in the city. From September, 1880, until his death, in March, 1900, he received an allowance of fifty dollars a month for the expenses of the presidential office, so that during the twenty years, 1880–1900, he received twelve thousand dollars[1] as President and Professor of Theology and Philosophy, only as expenses, however, for the conduct of his office as president. Today the salary of the president of the college is six thousand dollars per annum.

It can thus be readily seen that the finances of the college made it impossible for Wise to retire even if he had desired to do so. In accepting the election as president of the college he had written: "The indigent student will always find him ready to help. It will be his pride to be a parental friend

[1] Most of this money was used by Dr. Wise for the support of needy students.

to the intelligent youth of our country, whose confidence he flatters himself to possess, and claims but one reward, success."

Long before the close of his life these words became a living truth. At the time of his death there were sixty-one graduates of the Hebrew Union College and seventy-three students in the college. These 134 were his "boys," and during his life each year his birthday was appropriately celebrated by the "boys," who looked upon him as a venerable sage, a wise counsellor and a kind father. He assisted all of them financially, and his home and table were always open to them. Every Passover Eve the Seder was celebrated, and the whole student body sat down with the family to the Passover feast. The anniversary of his death has been designated as Founder's Day, and is annually observed at the college, and in every congregation in which a graduate of the college officiates beautiful tributes are paid to his memory.

Wise was a great college president. As president his administrative work was arduous. In the first place he had to build up the college, prepare the curriculum, secure a competent faculty, and induce young men to attend the institution. The whole scheme was an experiment, but ten years

after the opening of the college, when the graduates were eagerly sought by the large congregations in the land, its success was assured, and at the time of his death, in 1900, the graduates of the college were at the head of the leading Jewish reform congregations of America. In New York, Silverman had succeeded Gottheil, of Temple Emanuel; in Philadelphia, Krauskopf occupied the pulpit of Samuel Hirsch, and Berkowitz that of the orthodox Jastrow; in Chicago, Stolz that of the learned Felsenthal; in Baltimore, Rosenau had the pulpit of Szold; and in Cincinnati, Philipson was the rabbi of Lilienthal's congregation, and Louis Grossmann, who had been the associate of Wise, was about to succeed him, and in New Orleans, Heller had followed James K. Gutheim.

In addition to these, other graduates of the college were officiating in New York, Buffalo, Albany, Rochester, Brooklyn, Boston, Cleveland, Baltimore, Richmond, Va., Chicago, Kansas City, Milwaukee, Detroit, St. Louis, Peoria, Denver, Mobile, Louisville, Galveston, and in many smaller cities throughout the country. A few years ago one of the graduates was chosen rabbi at San Francisco, and another rabbi of a large congregation in London, England. Today the number of graduates has increased to 170, and

the alumni of the Hebrew Union College is an important and influential body.

The official reports of the Board of Governors of the Hebrew Union College contain the monthly and annual reports of the president of the college. These give evidence of the painstaking labours of Wise as an executive. Without the assistance and loyal support of the Board of Governors, of which the late Bernhard Bettmann, of Cincinnati, was president from 1875 to 1911, Wise would have been unable to carry on his work.

His last official report is the monthly report dated February 27, 1900.[1] In this he says: "It is a source of great pleasure to me that I can report to your honourable body that the Hebrew Union College in the twenty-five years of its existence has reached the zenith of its glory. It can point with satisfaction to a faculty of nine teachers, several of them authors of eminence. . . . To the best of my knowledge this is not the case in similar schools here or abroad. . . . The Hebrew Union College points with pride to its sixty-four graduated rabbis[2] . . . and seventy-three students. Thank Heaven for this unparalleled success of an institution which had to contend

[1] *Proceedings U. A. H. C.*, pp. 4163–64.

[2] This included honorary degrees.

against so much opposition, indifferentism on the one hand and hostility on the other."

Wise was not only an efficient college executive, but he was a successful teacher. The first requisite of a good teacher is to enjoy the confidence, respect, and love of his students. This Wise had to the fullest extent. He was not only their professor, but their spiritual and foster father. To him the students were not only seekers after knowledge, but they were in reality his "boys." He looked after their material as well as their spiritual welfare. He never could forget with what kindness he had been treated in his student days, and he now returned this a hundredfold. To the students and graduates of the college, Wise was always the "Master."

As Professor of Theology, Philosophy, and History, his learning and scholarship were appreciated by all who sat at his feet. He prepared his lectures very carefully, and many of his books are the result of his academic career, notably *The History of the Hebrews' Second Commonwealth*, published in 1880, and the *Pronaos to Holy Writ*, published in 1891.

It was Wise's custom to welcome the students at the beginning of each college year with an appropriate address, and he always insisted on the

importance of scholarship. In one of these addresses he said: "There can be no victory without combat, no triumph without a struggle, and the value of the one is measured by the intensity of the other. The student's combat is in his studies, and his triumphs in his learning. . . . Young men, the great mystery of success lies in your acquisition of knowledge first, and an enthusiastic persistence in your work. Your knowledge is your capital. There is nothing profane in learning, and what is usually called profane learning is an important department of your studies. . . . Judaism must be studied in the products of the Hebrew mind, and these are preserved in Israel's great literature."

He always insisted on the cultivation of religious zeal. "The morality of the rabbinical student," he said, "who seeks rabbinical honours from his Alma Mater, includes the possession of genuine religious zeal and enthusiasm. Without this he may become an actor in the pulpit, a polished elocutionist, a sensationalist, a seeker of plaudits, but no rabbi. I consider it my duty to admonish all present to leave this college if they lack religious zeal and enthusiasm for they never will be honest rabbis; their whole life would be criminal. If you do not possess this excellent quality, you must

cultivate it assiduously so that it may become permanent in your character; you must be conscientious in your religious practices as in your studies. . . ."[1]

And thus for nearly twenty-five years he continued to work faithfully, zealously, and industriously for the college as its president and one of its teachers, worked for the love of work, for Israel's cause, for the preservation of Judaism in America by the establishment of a rabbinical college.

Although he gave his services gratuitously, he gave them willingly, and he never shirked his duty. Wise was always at his post of duty, he seldom missed a lecture, and when the end came he was in the midst of his boys. For on that Sabbath afternoon, March 24, 1900, just as he had finished his hour of instruction and was about to arise from his chair, the stroke that proved to be fatal was received. He literally died in harness. Probably no man knew him better as a teacher than his friend and successor, Moses Mielziner, the great professor of Talmud.

In "An Appreciation," delivered in the college chapel the Saturday after the great founder's death, he said[2]: "Dr. Isaac M. Wise was 'a prince

[1] *Selected Writings of I. M. Wise*, pp. 391–396.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 113–121.

and a great man in Israel.' He was a prince, a spiritual prince. . . . Eulogies in honour of the deceased great leader and teacher will soon be delivered from the pulpits of all temples and synagogues of this country. But it was found to be proper that today, at the re-opening of our interrupted sessions, a memorial service be held here in our Hebrew Union College. For who has more cause to honour the departed great leader than this college? This institution was his beloved child, which he fostered and brought up, and to which he devoted his best time and power, aye, his very last activity in life was the instruction he gave here on last Saturday just before having received the warning stroke that the end was near. . . .

"My friends, we are told in the Talmud that when Rabbi Jochanan ben Zaccai, the most distinguished teacher of his time, was about to die, he was surrounded by his disciples who asked for his last admonition and blessing, and on this occasion they addressed him with these words: 'Thou art the light of Israel, the right-handed pillar, the powerful hammer.' These three epithets are indeed very significant. They characterize the principal merits of that great master of old, and I think they designate also the principal

merits of the great master whose death we are mourning." Dr. Mielziner then characterizes Wise as the American Rabbi Jochanan ben Zaccai, because, like the rabbi of old, who saved Judaism by establishing the famous academy at Jabneh, so Wise saved Judaism in America by establishing the Hebrew Union College.

It was not, however, until the death of Wise that the Jews of America were willing to contribute large sums for the permanent endowment of the Hebrew Union College. The executive boards of the Union then began a movement to establish the Isaac M. Wise Endowment Fund in honour of the man who founded the college, and who served without compensation for a quarter of a century as its President and Professor of Theology and Philosophy.

The college authorities sought to raise a fund of $500,000, and the propaganda in behalf of this endowment was placed in the hands of Rabbi Joseph Krauskopf, of Philadelphia, through whose enthusiastic efforts nearly $400,000 have been collected.

Wise, in his daily journeys to and from his College Hill home, often passed the beautiful site where now stands the handsome Hebrew Union College buildings, but, like the great lawgiver of

Israel, though Wise saw the promised land, he did not live to enter it.

Within the walls of that great institution, whence have gone forth 170 young men, educated as American rabbis, the spirit of Isaac Mayer Wise is all-pervading. His life-size portrait stands in the Board of Governors' room, and in the hall Sir Moses Ezekiel's great bronze bust greets the visitor.

Today the Hebrew Union College, founded by Wise, has outlived the violent opposition directed against its establishment and the bitter attacks made upon it during the first decade of its existence. The Eastern radical rabbis gradually rallied to its support and nearly all of them reversed their unfavourable opinions regarding that institution. Probably the strongest evidence that can be cited to support this view is the fact that Dr. Kaufman Kohler, Einhorn's son-in-law, and successor at Temple Beth El, New York, who, in 1871, published the following[1]: "The editor of the *Israelite* and the *Deborah* said once to the writer of this article, in Philadelphia, 'I regret that I did not follow the legal profession. I would have succeeded much better in America.' It is really a pity that the advocate of Judaism had not followed

[1] *Jewish Times*, vol. iii., p. 20.

this career. It would have been much better for his own cause and the cause of Israel if he had become a lawyer. He had an especial talent for twisting and lawyer's tricks, which are altogether foreign to the cause of Judaism," was one of the Board of Examiners of the college in 1883, when the first class was graduated, is now the honoured President of the college and among the most zealous and enthusiastic eulogists of the college and its founder, Wise.

CHAPTER XIV

THE CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN RABBIS

WHEN Isaac Mayer Wise began his constructive work in American Judaism he was of the opinion that he could accomplish his purpose best by the establishment of a conference of rabbis, and by means of such body organize a congregational union and found a rabbinical college. But after a campaign of more than a quarter of a century he realized that he could not depend upon the rabbis as such to advocate union, and that no conference of rabbis could be held together until a rabbinical college was founded whose graduates, more or less homogeneous and schooled in American Judaism, were numerically sufficient to form a nucleus for such a rabbinical association.

Prior to 1889, the year in which the Central Conference of American Rabbis was organized, there had been several efforts made by Wise to establish rabbinical conferences, notably in 1848–49 and in 1855. Both failed because of the diver-



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sity of opinions held by the rabbis in America on nearly all important religious questions. The Cleveland conference of 1855 was an ambitious project, and its failure widened the breach not only between reform and orthodox Judaism, but between the radical and moderate or conservative reformers.

After the failure of the first effort for union in 1848–49, Wise made no further attempt in that direction while at Albany. Within a year after his arrival in Cincinnati he began again to agitate in the columns of the *Israelite* the necessity of a conference of rabbis and laymen. In the March 2, 1855,[1] issue of the *Israelite* he writes: "If it is admitted that the evil, every man a law unto himself, exists, and that it should be remedied, the next legitimate question will be, How can it be remedied? We say by a regular triennial synod. . . . We must have a conference to organize a synod, for this alone will settle the difficulties and open a bright future for our religion and our religious institutions in this country."

On August 10, 1855,[2] there appears in the *Israelite* a call for "The First Conference," signed by Rev. Drs. Cohn, of Albany; Guenzberg and Hochheimer, of Baltimore; Illowy, of St. Louis;

[1] Vol. i., No. 34. [2] Vol. ii., No. 5.

Kalisch, of Cleveland; Merzbacher, of New York, and Lilienthal, Rothenheim, and Wise, of Cincinnati. The conference, which ministers and delegates of Israelitish congregations were invited to attend, at Cleveland, October 17, 1855, was: "To deliberate on the following points: (1) Articles of Union of American Israel on Theory and Practice; (2) A Plan to Organize a Regular Synod Composed of Delegates of Congregations; (3) To Discuss and Refer to a Committee a Plan for a Minhag America; (4) A Plan for Scholastic Education, and, (5) Other Propositions Presented."

In pursuance of this call there met at Cleveland on October 17, 1855, the rabbis and representatives of congregations of Albany, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Detroit, Louisville, New York, and Philadelphia, and representatives from St. Louis, Baltimore, Boston, and Richmond. Wise was elected president; Cohn, of Albany, vice-president, and Lilienthal, secretary. Speaking of the officers, Wise writes in his *Reminiscences*[1]: "Two mistakes were made at the very start in the election of officers; I was elected president, Dr. Lilienthal secretary, and Dr. Cohn vice-president. Instead of that, Cohn or Merzbacher should have been elected president, Leeser vice-president, and a

[1] Page 312.

scribe, not an orator, should have been elected secretary."

Wise's purpose at this time was to bring about a union between reform and orthodox, and he proposed a platform upon which he thought both parties could stand. In fact, Isaac Leeser, the editor of the *Occident*, the organ of orthodoxy, was at the convention, and while there agreed to the platform, the most important declarations of which were the following: (1) The Bible is of Immediate Divine Origin; (2) The Talmud Contains the Traditional, Legal, and Logical Exposition of the Biblical Laws which must be Expounded and Practised according to the Comments of the Talmud; (3) The Resolutions of the Synod in accordance with the above Principles are Legally Valid; (4) Statutes and Ordinances Contrary to the Laws of the Land are Invalid. The conference appointed a committee, consisting of Wise, Rothenheim, Merzbacher, and Kalisch, to prepare a Minhag America, or American ritual, and also committees to prepare a plan for a permanent synod, and for institutions such as a rabbinical college and charitable organizations.

Unfortunately, however, no further meeting of this body took place. While the conference was still in session, there arrived in America from

Germany, Rabbi David Einhorn, who had been elected rabbi of the reform congregation Har Sinai, of Baltimore. Rabbi David Einhorn was an ultra radical in Judaism. He was a follower of Samuel Holdheim, the leading radical of Berlin. Soon thereafter he became an opponent of Wise, and during the ensuing twenty-three years bitterly opposed him in all his projects for a union and a rabbinical college. Har Sinai congregation issued a protest, written by Einhorn, against the Cleveland conference, because of its pronouncement in favour of the Talmud, claiming that such a declaration was a decided step backwards. Protests were likewise issued against the conference by the reform congregations Beth Elohim, of Charleston, S. C., and Temple Emanuel, of New York. The orthodox element, under the leadership of Leeser, likewise attacked the work of the conference and Wise.

In his *Reminiscences*[1] Wise, after speaking of the supposed success of the conference, writes: "We idealists see light and hope, victory and triumph, where cold reason perceives no noticeable change. We dip our brush in golden colours, paint our imaginary pictures, and embrace them as though they were real creations. The beloved smiles, and

[1] Pages 317–318.

in this smile the enamoured idealist imagines that he reads a declaration of love. Judaism, progress —American Judaism free, progressive, enlightened, united, and respected—this was my ideal, hence in every smile of the beloved I saw victory of my love. I have often been woefully deceived. Still more often and more woefully have I deceived myself. . . . My joy was not to last long; the disillusionment followed quickly, and there began a new struggle which seemed as though it would never end.

"The storm which denuded my tree of hope of its blossoms broke in the East. Protests against the resolutions of the conference were published in Baltimore, Charleston, and New York. These inflicted a sore wound upon the unity of American Judaism. They fell like lightning from a clear sky. No one expected them, for they proceeded from the reform camp, whose active support we counted upon confidently. A split among the reformers, whose principles were not yet definitely fixed, appeared to me an event painful and fraught with misfortune. It depressed and discouraged me completely; for without union among the reformers, who were in the minority, no progressive measures could be hoped for from the synod. There was hope for the victory of the reform ele-

ment only on the condition that its leaders were all united. All the efforts for union were shattered, for the moment at any rate, by these protests. Like Jeremiah, I sat upon the ruins. . . . The best thing to have done at that time would have been to have gone at once to Charleston, Baltimore, and New York in order to have effected a recall of the protests by personal efforts and explanations. I would have done this if honour and self-respect had not forbidden; for in addition to the protests, there appeared in the German newspaper of Baltimore, and later in the monthly magazine *Sinai* [Einhorn's paper], which was established for this purpose, as well as in the New York *Asmonean* . . . articles on the conference, its members, officers, and resolutions which were so dishonouring, insulting, and abusive, so charged with personal insults and fierce invectives, that my enthusiasm cooled perceptibly, my optimism was sadly diminished, and a feeling of aversion to all public activities possessed me. We were treated not as scholars, rabbis, public teachers of religion, but like a crowd of political bummers and adventurous tramps; not like men who served the cause of all Israel, but like a band of self-seeking, law sharpers, looking only to their own self-aggrandizement, and that, too, in pithy

and biting language, the like of which we had never met with before, and which disclosed hatred, rage, and fanaticism rather than instruction and argument. . . .

"The whole purpose of the conference and proposed synod was passed over in silence, and the Talmud, together with the men who had attended the meeting, were made the chief objects of attack. The cry was that the conference had declared for the authority of the Talmud. . . . At that time the Talmud was denounced in unmeasured fashion. . . . Yea, it was declared to be immoral, not only in newspaper articles, but also in sermons—and orthodox Judaism was represented as being an offence against reason and morality and unmercifully scored. I could not permit this to pass without notice. After I had fought for years publicly and most successfully against English missionaries. . . . I could not allow an attack to be made on the morality of the Talmud, and orthodoxy within my own camp. . . . After I had successfully defended the honour of the Talmud and orthodox Judaism on the score of their morality, I began in March, 1856, to explain and establish scientifically the significance of the resolutions of the Cleveland conference. The object of that essay was to establish the following four

propositions: (1) The Talmud amends biblical laws; (2) Has rescinded biblical laws; (3) Has made new laws, and (4) Has rescinded many of its own laws. . . . The attacks in the East and my bold defence of the morality of the Talmud and orthodox Judaism won for me the confidence of the orthodox and moderate parties; hence my efforts for reform aroused confidence, and this was the reason why the reform movement made such rapid progress in the West and South. The fight on the Talmud drove me to Talmudical studies once again. Whenever failure was my portion, whenever I was offended and made unhappy in life, I took refuge in study to forget the world and myself in it. . . . I learned from the Talmud a heroic but very effective remedy to forget personal ills, 'If you have a headache, study in the law.' I did this now. . . ."

AN AMERICAN PRAYER-BOOK

The Cleveland conference had one important result, the completion of an American ritual, or Minhag America as it was called. The conference appointed a committee composed of Wise, Rothenheim, Merzbacher, and Kalisch. Merzbacher died the following year, so the other three took up the work during the winter of 1856–57.

In the spring of 1847, Wise had, at the request of Dr. Lilienthal, prepared a ritual to be considered by Drs. Lilienthal, Wise, Felsenheld, and Kohlmeyer. Nothing, however, came of this movement, which has been described in Chapter V. of this book. The committee prepared Part One of the new ritual, and in the preparation of the work the following principles were observed: (1) No one man is authorized to make a prayer-book for a congregation; (2) The ancient form of divine service to be preserved; (3) Individual congregations to decide how much English or Hebrew to be recited in the service; (4) Whatever is contrary to the conception of biblical Judaism, American Israel, or the wants and demands of our time must be omitted, and the whole must be no longer than necessary for a divine service with choir, organ and sermon. In his *Reminiscences*,[1] Wise writes: "It was out of the question to retain the old prayers unchanged, because the belief in the coming of a personal Messiah descended from the house of David had disappeared from among the people. The return to Palestine, the restoration of the Davidic dynasty, of the sacrificial cult, and the accompanying priestly caste, were neither articles of faith nor commandments of Judaism,

[1] Page 343.

while the lamentations over oppression, persecution, and the accompanying cry for vengeance were untrue and immoral so far as American Jews were concerned. The cabalistical portions which had crept into the prayer-book, and the obstinate adherence to the doctrine of the bodily resurrection were regarded as unjustified. We also agreed that the Sabbath service including the sermon should not last longer than two hours. . . . We resolved to publish an English and German, as well as a Hebrew version of the prayers, and that it should be left to each congregation to decide what language it wished to use. . . .

"Wise was the referee, Kalisch and Rothenheim the critics. Whatever was not adopted unanimously was rejected. Wise prepared the English version for which Nathan Meyer furnished metrical translations. Kalisch and Rothenheim composed the metrical portions of the German version. The prose German translations were divided among the three. The commission met in my [Wise's] library, and finished the work in thirty-eight sessions. They adhered anxiously to tradition; they had no desire to found a new religion, nor institute a new cult; they wished to recast the old and traditional prayers reverently so they might be brought into accord with the religious

consciousness of the time and the democratic principles of the new fatherland. After the work had been finished, Bloch & Company [of which Isaac M. Wise was a member] had to defray the cost of publication. . . . Before the last leaf had left the press, it had been derided and decried throughout the land, although only the first part (without services for New Year's Day, and Day of the Atonement) had appeared. The name, Minhag America, was popular; but not the book, which was attacked savagely in both camps (orthodox and reform) in the East and rejected. My congregation was the first to adopt the book, but not without objections being raised. . . . The old prayer-book was deeply rooted in home, school, and synagogue.

"It was in the summer of 1857 that the Minhag America finally appeared. For eleven years I had cherished the idea, and now it was consummated, but it was attacked with all the weapons possible immediately upon its appearance, and yet it is the only monument of the first Cleveland conference and is now [1875] used in at least one-third of all American Jewish congregations. . . ."

The radical reformers of the East were German and wedded to the German prayer-book, and Wise's espousal of an American prayer-book gave

them an additional excuse for refusing to join him in his efforts for a conference and a union, which undoubtedly would have adopted either Wise's Minhag America or some other union prayer-book. In the *Israelite* of December 31, 1858,[1] Wise prints an editorial, in which he sets forth his opposition to the German prayer-books as follows: (1) No reason why the synagogue should be identified with the German element, an element as strange to Judaism as Chinese is; (2) Dislikes linguistic separation from the community. If any other language than Hebrew is to be used then English should be used; (3) Can not see why the American Jews should perpetuate the language of the country in which they were denied the rights of man; (4) The entire youth of the country ignorant of German; (5) Dangerous to introduce a prayer-book that will require ten years to get rid of; (6) Object of a prayer-book is solely and exclusively to maintain union of synagogues. German prayer-book only destroys union.

"Strange, indeed," he writes in the same editorial, "is the fact of radical reformers insisting upon Germanizing our synagogues in the heart of America; still against every sound principle they attempt to impose a German prayer-book

[1] Vol. v., No. 26.

on the synagogue just to impede the course of reform."

It was not, however, until 1894, five years after the organization of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, that a union prayer-book was adopted, and then Wise was the first to request that his Minhag America should be replaced by the union prayer-book.

THE CONFERENCES OF 1869, 1871, AND 1885

Wise never abandoned the hope of bringing about a union of Hebrew congregations through the aid of the rabbis, until he saw that no help could be expected from the rabbis of the East.

During the sixties, and especially in 1868, he had issued a call for a conference, but when in 1869 Drs. Einhorn and Adler, of New York, issued a call for a conference of progressive rabbis to meet in Philadelphia, he attended the same, but was unsuccessful in getting that conference to adopt a plan for a convention to establish a rabbinical college. This Philadelphia conference issued a statement, setting forth the underlying principles of the reformers in Judaism, and adopted certain reforms regarding rabbinical legislation on marriage and divorce, and after adjourning to meet in

Cincinnati, in 1870, never met again, because its leading members refused to meet with Wise.

The 1871 conference, which met in Cincinnati and adopted resolutions favouring the establishment of a rabbinical college, has been discussed in Chapter XII. of this book.

In 1885, Dr. Kaufman Kohler, now the president of the Hebrew Union College, and the honorary president of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, called the Pittsburgh conference of which Wise became the president. This conference adopted a declaration of principles setting forth succinctly the principles of reform Judaism, and was bitterly attacked by the orthodox and conservative Jews in this country.

These conferences had no permanency, because there was not yet in this country a sufficient number of rabbis who were homogeneous in thought and education.

In the July 11, 1884, issue of the *Israelite*[1] Wise wrote prophetically: "The graduates of the Hebrew Union College established an alumnal association, and elected their officers. The first meeting will take place in St. Louis in July, 1885. Here you have a nucleus for a permanent rabbinical association." In 1889, five years later, the Cen-

[1] Vol., xxi., No. 2.

tral Conference of American Rabbis was organized in Detroit. And thus in the seventy-first year of Wise's life was formed the last of the three great organizations founded by him for the perpetuation of Judaism in America.

THE CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN RABBIS

The Union of American Hebrew Congregations, founded in 1873, established the Hebrew Union College in 1875, and in 1889 the graduates of the Hebrew Union College organized a Central Conference of American Rabbis.

In the May 16, 1889, issue of the *American Israelite*,[1] a few weeks prior to the meeting of the eleventh council of the union which was to be held at Detroit, in July of that year, Wise wrote: "Will you call a conference? One of our friends asked in a sort of an admonishing tone. We will not, is our reply, although we are willing at any time to call the continuation of the Pittsburgh conference if the majority of its members authorize us to convene it, or, if in July next at Detroit at the meeting of the council of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations the rabbis present want it so, or to establish some new rabbinical connection. At

[1] Vol. xxv., No. 46.

the same time we admit, as we always did, that a close union and co-operation of the rabbis in this country would be a great blessing to the cause of Judaism and a great benefit to the rabbis themselves.

"We are in a state of primitive anarchy in all matters appertaining to the synagogue, and the lawful relations of the rabbi and the congregation, and by the way of self-deception we call it personal freedom or free development, or by any other optimistic name, which is the mantle of charity thrown over the frail limbs of our disintegrating self-conceit. If you want a change, you must do it, we are tied down to the Pittsburgh conference." [1]

Accordingly, at Detroit, on July 10, 1889, at the close of the session of the council of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the Central Conference of American Rabbis was organized by thirty rabbis. A committee of five reported the following plan of organization: There were to be five officers, president, vice-president, corresponding and recording secretaries, and a treasurer; the proceedings of the Modern Rabbinical Conferences from that held in Brunswick in 1844 should be taken as a basis; any rabbi holding office in any Hebrew congregation, and any one who has held

[1] Wise was president of that conference.

such an office, and all graduates of an acknowledged rabbinical seminary or college, are eligible to membership. Likewise all doctors of philosophy or psychology that possess the rabbinical diploma from a competent seminary, preachers and teachers of religion who have been for at least three successive years discharging those duties in any one congregation, all authors of eminent books on any subject appertaining to Jewish theology or literature, all such men who have rendered important practical services to the cause of Judaism. The purposes of the association were: (1) To maintain and perpetuate a union of all American rabbis; (2) To publish a year-book of its proceedings; (3) To establish a fund for the support of superannuated rabbis.

Rev. Dr. Samuel Adler, Rabbi Emeritus of Temple Emanuel, the only surviving member in America of any of the European rabbinical conferences held after 1844, was elected honorary president, and, "in spite of his strenuous protests, the unanimous sentiments were in favour of Dr. Isaac M. Wise, of Cincinnati, as president," and he was chosen, and during the remaining eleven years of his life he held this important office.

The conference published annually a year-book of its proceedings, and the splendid work of that

body is today a valuable contribution to the history of American Judaism and Jewish learning. The most important work of the conference during Wise's presidency was the preparation and the publishing in 1894 of a union prayer-book, and the papers on Judaism read at the World's Parliament of Religions, held during the Columbian Exposition, at Chicago, in August, 1893.

Annually on the assembling of the conference, Wise delivered his presidential message. In his first address, delivered in Cleveland, in the summer of 1890,[1] he reviews the previous efforts for a conference in this country, and points out the cause of failure. The causes of disunion were: the spread of reform in the synagogue; the different prayer-books in use, and the different schools and localities whence the many rabbis came. In the course of his address, he said: "But the union and the college remained the rock of peace and solidarity in American Israel, the beacon light of American Judaism. And here are ninety rabbis peaceably and hopefully united to be now and forever the nucleus, the centre of gravity, to all colleagues who are desirous to work in the name of God for the house of Israel, and the sublime cause of humanity. . . .

[1] *Year Book*, C. C. A. R., 1890.

"It is undoubtedly the duty and the right of the united rabbis to protect Judaism against stagnation, and each individual rabbi against the attacks frequently made upon everyone who proposes any reform measure. Let the attack hereafter be made on the conference, and let the honour of the individual be preserved intact. All reforms ought to go into practice on the authority of the conference, not only to protect the individual rabbi, but to protect Judaism against presumptuous innovations and the precipitations of rash and inconsiderate men. The united rabbis of America have undoubtedly the right and the duty to produce a uniform form of worship for all houses of worship. . . . All work done must correspond to the principle that Judaism is a universal religion and must contain nothing contrary to it."

At the World's Parliament of Religions, Wise read two profound papers, "An Introduction to the Theology of Judaism," and "The Ethics of Judaism." He considered it a great honour to be chosen by the Central Conference of American Rabbis to present such important matters.

In one of the few letters written by him that have been preserved, he writes of these addresses. The correspondent is the late Mr. William Stix, of St. Louis, formerly of Cincinnati, a lifelong friend:

CINCINNATI, Sept. 22, 1893.

MY DEAR FRIEND WM. STIX:

I am much obliged to you for your kind congratulations on my second speech (The Ethics of Judaism) delivered before the Parliament of Religious in Chicago. You are the only man outside of the hall where it was delivered, that did send me kind words of recognition.

According to the official critics in Chicago, my first speech in the Parliament on the Theology of Judaism was my masterwork, but I could not publish it in full; it is too long and too abstruse. It will appear in full in the book in which all will be collected in one volume.[1]

However, I do not glory in any of my literary productions, nor am I greedy for applause, although like others I am glad to hear a pleasant word from my friends and do highly value your kind letter. What I do glory in and consider the most triumphant moment of my life is, that I could and did proclaim the God of Israel and His ethical law in that august assembly, before the eyes of the world's scholarship, and I did do it intensely Jewish, without reference to any other creed, belief, or literature, simply our own from our own sources; and have thus published to the world boldly and fully the sap, flower, and fruit of Judaism, and yet commanded the respect of the assembled representatives of all religions. This is the great triumph in which I glory, for which I praise

[1] *Judaism at the World's Parliament of Religions*, U. A. H. C., Cincinnati, 1894.

the Almighty, that He has preserved me to celebrate that most gratifying moment of my life. . . .

Yours, as ever,

ISAAC M. WISE.

After the Milwaukee meeting of the conference, held in 1896, Wise stated in his annual address that the conference consisted of the reformatory element in Judaism only, and that its standpoint was historical Judaism, that is, Judaism of all ages, and not that of one period, place, or class of people. In 1897 the conference met at Montreal, Canada, and in his annual address, Dr. Wise discussed the question of Zionism which was then being agitated.

Wise had always been opposed to Zionism—If Zionism means the founding of a national state in Palestine and the return of the Jews to that state. He was too intense an American to feel otherwise. As early as October 22, 1852, in an editorial in the *Asmonean*[1] of that date on the reading of the Bible in the public schools, he said: "As citizens we must not be distinct from the rest, in religion only we are Jews, in all other respects we are American citizens." On July 10, 1868,[2] he wrote: "the *Israelite* has almost obliterated the idea of a personal Messiah, and of returning to Jerusalem, and has endeared the country to the

[1] Vol. vi., No. 27.

[2] *Israelite*, vol. xv., No. 1.

Israelite as his home, his promised land, his Jerusalem, in which the God of his fathers delights."

In 1869, as a member of the Philadelphia conference, he approved of its declaration: "The Messianic Aim of Israel is not the Restoration of the Old Jewish State under a Descendant of David Involving a Second Separation from the Nations of the Earth, but the Union of All Children of God in the Confession of the Unity of God so as to Realize the Unity of all Rational Creatures and Their Call to Moral Sanctification."

In the March 17, 1871,[1] issue of the *Israelite*, he wrote: "Outside of the synagogue we are citizens of the land of our nativity or adoption and need not perceptibly differ from any fellow-man. In public life, in business, in culture, in all worldly aspirations, we have lost our identity, and very few if any wish to restore it. In the synagogue, in the public demonstration of our religious life we must preserve our identity, we must bear Israel's badge of honour conferred on the congregation of Yeshurun by Moses and the prophets by the hands of Providence manifested in three thousand years of history."

On the question of purchasing Palestine,[2] he

[1] Vol. xvii., No. 38.

[2] *Ibid.*, xxxii., N. S., No. 24, January, 1879.

said: "Lay aside all these considerations and ask the question, if Palestine should be purchased, who is to go there? The American Jew is an American to all intents and purposes. So is the English Jew an Englishman, French Jew a Frenchman, and the same is the case in Germany, Hungary, Italy, and also in Russia, although they are oppressed, yet they are intensely Russian. It may be put down as a fact, American and European Jews would not immigrate to Palestine, not even if the Messiah himself, riding upon that identical ass upon which Abraham and Moses rode, would come and invite them. Those who pray for their returning to Palestine do not mean it. . . . If one believes the Jews would go to Palestine if that country were purchased by the Jewish capitalists and made a quasi-Jewish country, he is gravely mistaken. The Jew's nationality is endemic; it is not conditioned by space, land, or water. . . . The Jew's Jewish nationality had been for centuries before this event [destruction of Jerusalem, 70 A.D.] independent of every soil; it has been and now is in his blood, in the purity of his race, in his beliefs, in his mode of thinking and feeling, it is all intellectual and moral without any reference to soil, climate, or any other circumstances. The Jewish nationality and his attachment to it

has been made portable; he carries it along with him wherever he goes, unites it with the country of his choice, and if he is a good man he is patriotic as a citizen no less than as a Jew. The one supports the other. He does not feel the least necessity of returning to Palestine if the country in which he lives suits his tastes and interests.

"This is a point which many of our Gentile neighbours do not seem to understand. The Jew has no king and no country, they say; that is a punishment to him because he has done this or that, or because he does not believe this or that. Has the Jew, Isaac Moses, less a country than the Gentile John Peter? Does France belong more to Pierre than to Moïse? What a horrible piece of nonsense! Are the Catholics or Methodists less scattered than the Jews? Is any race in the world in possession of any country? Now, we say the Methodists have no king and no country. They are scattered all over this continent, England, and a large portion of the Eastern continent. They will surely purchase Utah and Wyoming and live there. . . . Perhaps these Jewish capitalists who will buy Palestine will also obtain decrees or enactments of various governments to force Jews to immigrate. . . . But will not religious belief do it? And it is well known that religious

belief works miracles. Do you not believe the Bible, and does not that book predict the return of the Jews to Palestine? As regards miracles, of course we have nothing to say, except that in our humble opinion, from and after the year 1879 no miracles will be wrought. Sober people expect none, and the Jew is a very sober man. Whatever the belief of the Jew may be in regard to Palestine and the Messiah, it will hardly have any more influence on them practically than the second advent belief has on Christians, or fatalism has on the Turkish merchant who purchases goods in Vienna or Leipsic for his house in Constantinople."

In 1889 he was asked by the Rev. Dr. H. Pereira Mendes, a leading orthodox rabbi of New York, to take part on behalf of the Jews in a special celebration of Columbus Day. He published his reasons for declining to do so in the *Israelite* of June 27, 1889[1]: "We are Jews in religion and religion only and exclusively. In all other respects we are members of the human family and in every country citizens and an integral portion of that country's population, sharing equally with its interests, ideals, rights, and obligations. . . . We can not and do not admit that we are anywhere a distinct element from the rest of the popu-

[1] Vol. xxxv., No. 52.

lation, any more than the Methodists, Baptists, Catholics, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and Dissenters. We can not and will not make any Jewish demonstration in memory of an event which belongs to the history of mankind. We can not and will not single ourselves out as a special political community and erect for ourselves a modern Ghetto."

In his presidential address at Montreal, July 8, 1897, he said[1]:

"I consider it my duty also, Rev. Colleagues, to call your attention to the political projects engaging now a considerable portion of our co-religionists in Europe and also in our country, especially in New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, and other large cities. I refer, of course, to the so-called 'Friends of Zion,' Chovaveh Zion, who revive among certain classes of people the political national sentiment of olden times, and turn the mission of Israel from the province of religion and humanity to the narrow political and national field, where Judaism loses its universal and sanctified ground and its historical signification. The persecution of the Jews in Russia and Roumania and the anti-Semitic hatred against the Jewish race and religion, as it still exists in Germany, Austria, and partly in France, roused among the perse-

[1] 1897, *Year Book*, C. C. A. R.; *Israelite*, vol. xliv., No. 2.

cuted and outraged persons the hapless feeling of being hated strangers among hostile Gentiles. It was quite natural that this humiliating experience roused in their memory the glory of the past, when Israel was the great nation, the chosen people of God, and inspired in them the consolation, 'We are a great nation yet.' So the wronged man revenges himself on his oppressors generally with the pretence: I am as good and better than you. Generally speaking it is true, the persecuted is always better than his persecutors. This experience roused in those outraged men and women the old hope of restoration, the reconstruction of the Hebrew nationality, as in days of yore. The first step in this direction was the colonization of Palestine with Jewish agriculturists. This, of course, found favour and support among all good people, not indeed for the sake of Zion, but for the redemption of the persecuted and with the conviction that those poor neglected families can be redeemed morally and physically only by making of them honest and industrious tillers of the soil. Idealists and religious phantasts took hold upon this situation and made of it a general restoration of the Jews, and their returning to the Holy Land, although the greatest number of Jewish citizens in the countries where they enjoy all civil and

political rights, loudly disavowed any such beliefs, hopes, or wishes; yet the persecuted and expatriated from Russia and such other countries preached their new doctrine loudly and emphatically, and found advocates and friends also among Christians, more so even than among Jews. At last politicians seized the situation, and one of them, called Dr. Herzl, proposed to establish and constitute at once the Jewish State in Palestine, worked the scheme, and placed it so eloquently before the Jewish communities, that the utopian idea of a Jewish State took hold of many minds, and a congress of all Friends of Zion was convoked in the city of Munich, to meet there in August next. However, all this agitation on the other side of the ocean concerned us very little. We are perfectly satisfied with our political and social position. It can make no difference to us, in what form our fellow-citizens worship God, or what particular spot of the earth's surface we occupy. We want freedom, equality, justice, and equity to reign and govern the community in which we live. This we possess in such a fulness that no State whatever could improve on it. That new Messianic movement over the ocean does not concern us at all. But the same expatriated, persecuted, and outrageously wronged people came in large numbers also to us, and they

being still imbued with their home ideas, ideals, and beliefs, voiced these projects among themselves and their friends so loudly and so vehemently, that the subject was discussed rather passionately in public meetings, and some petty politicians of that class were appointed as delegates, we learn, to the Munich congress, and in each of those meetings, as reported by the press, so and so many rabbis advocated those political schemes, and comprised in the eyes of the public the whole of American Judaism as the phantastic dupes of a thoughtless utopia, which is to us a *fata morgana*, a momentary inebriation of morbid minds, and a prostitution of Israel's holy cause to a madman's dance of unsound politicans. Some of our colleagues—I recollect just now Dr. Gottheil and Dr. Kohler—gave utterance to our opinions in the New York meeting. But the newspaper world knows no difference of persons and dignitaries, it reported to all the world that so and so many rabbis advocated the scheme, and two opposed it. The honour and position of the American Israel demand imperatively that this conference, which does represent the sentiments of American Judaism *minus* the idiosyncrasies of those late immigrants, declare officially the American standpoint in this unpleasant episode of our history."

The conference referred this part of the presidential address to a committee consisting of Rev. Drs. Landsberg, Mielziner, and Samfield, who recommended the following report, which was unanimously adopted:

"Resolved, That we totally disapprove of any attempt for the establishment of a Jewish State. Such attempts show a misunderstanding of Israel's mission, which from the narrow political and national field has been extended to the promotion among the whole human race of the broad and universalistic religion first proclaimed by Israel's prophets. Such attempts do not benefit, but infinitely harm our Jewish brethren where they are still persecuted, by confirming the assertion of their enemies that the Jews are foreigners in the countries in which they are at home, and of which they are everywhere the most loyal and patriotic citizens.

"We reaffirm that the object of Judaism is not political nor national, but spiritual and addresses itself to the continuous growth of peace, justice, and love in the human race, to a Messianic time when all men will recognize that they form one great brotherhood for the establishment of God's kingdom on earth."

In the *Israelite* of September 16, 1897,[1] there is

[1] Vol. xliv., No. 12.

reprinted from the New York *Times* an article by Wise entitled, "A Jewish State Impossible," in which he sets forth at length his views on Zionism and which he concludes as follows:

"Everything is possible in dreamland or in Utopia. That Congress in Basle was a novelty, a gathering of visionary and impracticable dreamers who conceived and acted as a romantic drama, and applauded it all by themselves."

A special session of the conference was held at Cincinnati, on March 13, 1899, to celebrate the eightieth birthday of its founder, and it was at this conference that he delivered his last presidential address, in the course of which he said: "By this God-blessed organization, the American rabbis were united in a bond of brotherhood, all feuds, strifes, quarrels, and animosities which raged among us for many years vanished like the fog before the sun."[1]

Memorial addresses in honour of the founder were delivered at the Buffalo meeting of the conference held in July, 1900, and as a further mark of respect, the following resolution was adopted:

"We recommend that the name of the Rev. Isaac M. Wise be perpetually retained at

[1] 1899, *Year Book*, C. C. A. R., p. 28.

the head of the list of members of the Central Conference of American Rabbis on a separate page of each Year Book in the following form:

"ISAAC MAYER WISE

Founder of

CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN RABBIS

President 1889–1900."

Like the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, and the Hebrew Union College, the Central Conference of American Rabbis survived the death of its great founder, because this structure, like all his work, was laid upon broad and deep foundations. Today the conference has a membership of 240, has issued a revision of its prayer-book and has a fund of $37,500 for the benefit of the superannuated rabbis.

CHAPTER XV

PERSONAL ACTIVITIES AND CHARACTERISTICS

ISAAC MAYER WISE was intensely human. Although he was constantly engaged in espousing the cause of Judaism, in endeavouring to found organizations to carry out his ideas of reform, he did not neglect the brighter and lighter side of life and affairs. While at Albany he had organized a German literary society. His tastes were artistic and aesthetic. A lover of music, poetry, and art, a reader of the best writers of English and German, a delightful and charming companion, of exceptional ability in conversation and anecdote, sparkling with wit and mellow with humour, his presence was much in demand and he found it impossible to accept the many invitations that came to him.

In his official capacity, he performed countless marriage ceremonies, and in early years it was customary to celebrate such functions elaborately. His democratic ways endeared him to rich and

poor alike, and in his character there was no trace of the sycophant.

As a teacher of the young and middle-aged he succeeded by strength of character and the personal touch rather than by discipline. As a disciplinarian he was not a success. There is in the archives of the Albany congregation a letter dated March 15, 1852, tendering his resignation. It contains many naive statements throwing side-lights on his personality. The letter is in German. A free translation of the important paragraphs is as follows:

"Owing to conditions, regarding which I shall give proper explanations, I am compelled to inform you that it will be impossible for me to continue both as a teacher and rabbi, and if I give up teaching my salary as rabbi will not be sufficient for my living expenses.

"The principal cause of my resigning as teacher is the behaviour of the pupils. To keep order I am obliged to arm myself with a cane and punish the unmanageable crowd. Such a state of affairs is most distressing to me, and by no means in harmony with my character and my sentiments. Because of the unbecoming conduct of some of the pupils, I frequently leave the schoolroom a sick man. Aside from this, it is impossible for a man

who, during the week, wages battles with a crowd of ill-behaved children, to conduct three services on the Sabbath. . . . ."

Evidently the parents of the children disciplined them, for the resignation was withdrawn.

During Wise's long life he dedicated nearly seventy-five synagogues and temples, besides laying the corner-stones of many others, and inducting many rabbis into office.

In *Die Deborah* of December 22, 1892,[1] he writes: "How many synagogues have we dedicated?" To satisfy the curious writer he says he officiated sixty-five times at dedications. "In New England four times, New Haven, Boston, Hartford, Providence; in New York State ten times, New York City four times, Albany and Buffalo twice each, Syracuse and Hudson; in Pennsylvania seven times, Philadelphia twice, Titusville, Scranton, Easton, Reading, and Pottsville once each. At Baltimore, Md., Richmond and Petersburg, Virginia, Charleston and Huntington, West Virginia, Augusta and Brunswick, Georgia, Natchez, Mississippi, Cincinnati four times, Cleveland twice, Dayton twice, Kent, Portsmouth, Columbus, Toledo, and Hamilton. At Indianapolis, Fort Wayne, Evansville, Terre Haute, Lafayette,

[1] Vol. xxxviii., No. 25.

Ligonier, and Madison. At Chicago twice, Quincy and Peoria; Detroit and Jackson, Michigan, twice at St. Louis and once at Kansas City. At Louisville, Kentucky, and twice at Memphis, once each at Nashville and Chattanooga."

Between 1892 and 1900 he dedicated temples in the following cities: Dayton, Ohio; Chattanooga, Tennessee; Cleveland, Ohio; Peoria, Illinois; Chicago three times, and Indianapolis.

The Jewish Orphan Asylum, at Cleveland, Ohio, was founded at Wise's suggestion. In his initial call for a union of Israelites, in 1848, he had pointed out the necessity for caring for the widow and the orphan. In the *Israelite* of December 6, 1859,[1] he wrote: "The West must have a home for widows and orphans, this is indisputable, for the number of helpless widows and orphans which must be supported by the congregations is considerable already. We must imitate the noble example of New Orleans. The home of New Orleans is for the South; in Philadelphia we expect the Foster Home Society will gradually succeed in creating a home in the East. The Bene B'rith Society has the same object in view for their people in New York, but the West must have such an asylum as soon as possible, and must have a large establishment,

[1] Vol. vi., No. 24.

for the West is large." He then urges the members of various congregations to organize societies with a membership fee of fifty dollars. This he believes will secure fifty thousand dollars. A thousand additional members could contribute less. "Besides the above resources, we reckon upon two more. The Bene B'rith lodges under the jurisdiction of Grand Lodge No. 2 will certainly feel it their duty to countenance and support this enterprise, it being one of their sworn duties, a principal corner-stone of their superstructure. . . . We expect our friends here or abroad to furnish a practicable plan to carry out this purpose." He then urges the organization of societies with a different scale of membership fee. "The first thing is to agitate the matter everywhere, form societies to co-operate with other societies so that the plan may be carried out. We hope not to appeal in vain to our brethren. Let those who exercise the influence take this matter in hand. . . . The columns of our paper are open to discuss the matter thoroughly."

Shortly thereafter the suggestions made by him were carried out, and with the assistance of Bene B'rith lodges of District No. 2, comprising the States of Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, Illinois, Missouri, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Michigan,

and Wisconsin. A Jewish Orphan Asylum was established at Cleveland, Ohio, and Wise officiated at its opening in 1868. When, however, the new buildings were dedicated in July, 1888, he refused to attend, because some of the members of the board of directors had spoken without rebuke against rabbis.[1]

Wise was a charter member of many benevolent organizations, lodges, and orders, and was frequently called upon to address them. In his *Reminiscences*,[2] after describing the organization of two Bene B'rith lodges in Cincinnati, he writes: "My neighbours and friends, B. and M. Simon, persuaded me to join the Odd Fellows, for a new lodge, the Northwestern, was forming just then. I joined this lodge, but did not take any especially active part in the doings of the order. Another friend, M. J. Mack, was instrumental in having me join the Masons (Hanzelman Lodge). I began to build and do Mason's work. [He afterwards received the 32nd degree.] Later I joined the Druids, Hargurai, and I know not what other lodges; so, finally, I was initiated into so many secrets that my head fairly whirled with them all. The fact is that I learned nothing whatsoever from all these secrets; for there is nothing to them.

[1] *Israelite*, xxxv., No. 1. [2] Page 264.

That which Josephus Flavius once remarked to Apion, 'The children in the streets of Jerusalem use as playthings those things which your priests impart so secretly in your mysteries to the initiated,' may be aptly said of the secrets of all the secret orders. They do not amount to anything. Dull mechanism, symbolic trifling, and stiff routine, these are the chief features. The doctrines and instructions are very good and sensible, but as a general thing they are neither understood nor practised. Two reasons, however, induced me to continue my allegiance to the lodges, viz., their charity and the cosmo-political principle upon which they were based. Other things kept alive my interest in the Bene B'rith. Of these (and for a union, college, and orphan asylum) I will speak later, although I can think of no single public act of injustice of which I have been the victim, that was not inspired by Bene B'rith brethren and leaders."

Wise also became a member of the German Pioneer Society of Cincinnati, and for many years was the orator at its annual meeting, usually held on the night of Washington's birthday, at which he always delivered a patriotic address expressing to the fullest extent the most liberal views on all questions of the day.

Wise was temperate in his habits and he saw no harm in moderate drinking. He was unalterably opposed to sumptuary legislation of any kind. In 1872–1873, during the temperance crusade in Cincinnati, when emotional women knelt in prayer at street corners, he did not hesitate to preach boldly against them and their cause. He prepared an "Essay on The Temperance Question," which he read before a liberal society called "The Friends of Inquiry." In this essay, a copy of which is in the Public Library of Cincinnati, he says: "Is it morally wrong to take a glass of beer, wine, or champagne at dinner or at any other time? Or is it hypocrisy for hypocrisy's sake that persons using such beverages do it secretly as long as they can hide the fact? Let us see first what might be called morally wrong. Morally wrong is that which the intelligence by common consent calls so; or, as our religious friends maintain, which the Bible characterizes as such. . . .

"Here I wanted to establish this:

"I. The use of wine or strong drink as a beverage is no moral wrong, nor can it properly be called a waste of property:

"II. Whatever is not wrong to one class of our people can not be made so to any other in a democratic country.

"III. The abuse of anything not criminal or immoral, *per se*, does not justify the abolition or prohibition thereof.

"IV. Penal or prohibitory laws against acts or usages not criminal or immoral in themselves defeat the very end and object of all law.

"V. The abuse of religion and prayer is worse than the abuse of liquor.

"VI. The present crusade will not remedy the evil; it is contrary to law and liberty, and it makes us ridiculous in the eyes of the civilized world.

"The decree of King Ahasuerus, the ruler of Medo-Persia, reads: 'That every man be ruler in his house, and speak according to the tongue of his people.'"

Wise believed in the equality of men and women,[1] and he was the first to introduce family pews in the American synagogue so that men and women could worship together. Heretofore women had been excluded from the synagogue proper and compelled to sit in a gallery set apart from the men, or in another part of the synagogue if there was no gallery. In Albany, even before the introduction of family pews, in 1851, he had organized a choir of men and women, also an innovation, and confirmed boys and girls. Later he

[1] See *supra*, p. 149.

suggested that women should be eligible as members of the congregation. In 1876[1] he wrote a strong article on this question, in the course of which, he states: "In the Bible woman stands very high. At the beginning of Israel's natural life, woman appears as a leader so that she could say: 'Did God perhaps speak through Moses only; did he not also speak through us?' . . . During the rude period of the Judges, the Bible mentions five women of exceptional calibre. . . . None of the rabbinical provisions as to law and practice affected the high regard for woman; she always remained the queen of the heart and home. But up to 1000 A. C. all Jewish laws and customs adopted in Europe were Oriental in origin. The influence of Oriental society and the Koran gradually excluded women from public affairs of the community, so that up to our very day she was assigned to a subordinate position in the synagogue. To call a woman to the Thorah, or admit her to public honours equally with men would have appeared preposterous and would today be considered a desecration by the orthodox synagogue.

"In the early days of our activity in America, we admitted females to the choir. Then we confirmed boys and girls, and we allowed girls to read

[1] *Israelite*, vol. xxvii., No. 10.

the Thorah on that occasion. Later on we introduced family pews into the temple.

"With the admission of mothers and daughters to a recognized place in public worship came order and decorum. Abuses that had crept into the synagogue disappeared as soon as woman again took her proper place in the temple. But we can not stop here; the reform is not complete. You must enfranchise woman in your congregations, she must be a member, must have a voice and a vote in your assemblies. We need women in the congregational meetings to bring heart and piety into them. We must have women in the boards for the sake of the principle. We must have women in the school boards, to visit the Sabbath schools, and to make their influence felt. We must have women in the choir committee because they understand music better than men. But, all other considerations aside, the principles of justice and the law of God inherent in every human being, demand that woman be admitted to membership in the congregation and be given equal rights with man, that her religious feelings be allowed scope for the sacred cause of Israel.

"We are ready to appear before any congregation in behalf of any woman wishing to become a member thereof, and to plead her cause. We will

debate the question with any who will show us in what manner woman is less entitled to the privileges of the synagogue than man, or where her faith is less important to her salvation than man's is to him. Till then we maintain that women must become active members of the congregation for their own sake and for the benefit of Israel's cause."

Today women are eligible for membership in every reform congregation and form the larger part of the congregation at divine service, and women also represent congregations at the conventions of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

Within the past few years there have been organized, at the suggestion of Rabbi George Zepin, Director of the Board of Managers of Synagogue and School Extension of the Union, Sisterhoods in nearly all the congregations, and these have formed a National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods that meets at the same time and place the Union meets. These Sisterhoods solicit scholarships for the Hebrew Union College, and in 1916 twelve scholarships of $300 each were secured.

Wise, fond as he was of organization for various purposes, had little sympathy with "organized charity." His charitable nature, his implicit

confidence in every seeker for alms, his blind faith in every poor man or woman, made him intolerant of the methods of organized charity. If a man came to Dr. Wise and asked for money, clothes, food, lodging, or any other assistance, he received it and no questions were asked. If he were told the applicant was an impostor, he shrugged his shoulders or met the complaint with some apt biblical or Talmudical quotation. Many anecdotes are told of his charity and kindness. How he bought a new overcoat one winter's day and came home without it, having given it to some poor unfortunate whom he met on the way. No one in want ever left his door empty handed. His charity was not limited to small alms. He would assist unfortunate rabbis, unemployed cantors, and discharged teachers to earn a living by engaging in business or peddling, and would endorse their notes or guarantee their accounts with wholesale merchants. At his death a large amount of such worthless paper which he had been called upon to pay, was found by his executors.

When there was a necessity for immediate relief, he acted at once. On one Sabbath, during the early days of the great Russian immigration, long before the days of organized charity in Cincinnati, just as Wise was about to preach his sermon,

he received word that a large number of immigrants had arrived at one of the depots and were stranded, no arrangements having been made for their care. None present at the temple will ever forget the sermon of that day. Roused as he not often had been, he pleaded the cause of the poor unfortunate ones, and denounced the lack of preparation on the part of the community. Sending for his old-fashioned high hat, he concluded his address by emptying his pockets and his purse into it, and then sent it through the temple. A large fund was immediately raised.

Wise did not know the value of money and did not care for money. At the time of his death he was undoubtedly the leading rabbi in America, and yet his salary was only $6,000 per annum, much less than some of the graduates of his college. It had never occurred to him to ask for an increase. When he was in his seventy-second year, he was advised to make his will. "I have nothing to bequeath," he said. "The world will laugh at me if I leave a will." One day in 1894, believing his residence too small, he purchased at a very reasonable price a large residence near the college. When asked how he was going to pay for it, he laughed, and said, "Why, I have some bonds, and the balance I will borrow from the building associa-

tion, and thus will save money." His hearer being dubious about the savings, Wise said, "If I put a mortgage on the property, I'll be compelled to put aside a certain sum weekly. If I am not compelled to do so the money will go for other purposes. I must make provision for my family."

Unfortunately, this method of saving was not successful, for soon after his death, though the mortgage was paid off in his lifetime, the property depreciated just one half. During the Civil War, when collections for the *Israelite* were slow, he would publish the names of delinquent subscribers and the amount of their indebtedness in the paper and ask for remittances. Needless to say, very little was realized by this unique method of collection.

Wise was not only kind to all with whom he came in contact, but he was of a forgiving nature, and treated his detractors and religious opponents most magnanimously. When Isaac Leeser, who had opposed all his reforms, died in 1868, Wise published the following obituary in the *Israelite* of February 14th[1]: "He was an active labourer in the province of Jewish literature, a zealous advocate and expounder of Judaism, untiring in his efforts to benefit the cause of Israel, honest and

[1] Vol. xiv., No. 32.

consistent to the last day of his life. Thirty years ago when nobody in America raised his voice in behalf of Judaism, the silence of the grave raged within the congregation, and without prejudices nourished by the pulpit, and a host of paid missionaries undermined the ancient structure, the young German, Isaac Leeser, began his ministerial career in Richmond, Virginia, and soon after began his literary labours, and for thirty years he worked continuously. Among the American Jewish journalists he was the pioneer and for a long time he stood alone. True enough, he was our lifelong opponent, or rather we were his, for he advocated orthodoxy and conservatism in the synagogue before we entered life with our ideas of progress and reform; it is no less true that we had many a controversy publicly and privately which did not sound very friendly. Nevertheless, we never became so estranged to each other that we were not on speaking terms, or that we could not meet each other cordially on any occasion, because we never offered each other personal insult, nor did we at any time disrespect each other."

And upon the death of Rabbi David Einhorn, the ultra radical reformer, who likewise had opposed Wise's plans for a union and a rabbinical college,

Wise wrote in the November 7, 1879,[1] issue of the *American Israelite:* "Rev. Dr. David Einhorn is no more. . . . He was one of the foremost pioneers in the reform movement in the synagogue he had made himself profoundly felt by his eloquence, learning, and sagacity. . . . Dr. Einhorn distinguished himself in the German rabbinical conferences where he sided with Geiger, Holdheim, and other progressive rabbis, and advocated the cause he had espoused with decided ability and vehemence. In our country he adhered to the reform cause with the same decision and firmness of character.

"As a teacher in Israel he was a mighty man, highly respected for his eloquence and sagacity. As a writer he left behind him a prayer-book, a catechism, the first volume on Judaism, four volumes of *Sinai Journal*, all in German, in which many of his sermons and other literary productions were published. His biography ought to be written by one of his sons-in-law (Rabbis E. G. Hirsch and Kaufman Kohler) who had access to his papers. [This has not yet been done, though Dr. Kohler delivered an eloquent centenary address at the Rabbinical Conference.[2]] We can but briefly report the outline of the biography of

[1] Vol. xxxiii., N. S. No. 19. [2] 1909 *Year Book*, C. C. A. R.

one who will occupy a prominent page in Jewish history, and whose memory is sacred to every honest man in Israel. We feel incompetent to do him justice . . . and deeply feel the loss of a great teacher in Israel."

In the frequent autobiographical articles that appeared in the *Israelite* and *Deborah*, Wise refrained from mentioning his living opponents by name. His *Reminiscences* came to an abrupt close in 1857, because, had he continued them, it would have been necessary to enter in detail upon the great controversies with his opponents and detractors, many of whom were still living.

In the *Israelite* of March 21, 1895,[1] in which he sketches his career in America, writing of the opposition to the Cleveland conference, and the subsequent violent and abusive controversies, he says: "How and by whom that horrible state of affairs was engendered and promoted we could not write down without offence to the dead and to the surviving few—most of the latter repented the parts they played in that mournful drama—and without tearing the medicated bandages from wounds still bleeding, from sores that will not heal. . . ."

Isaac Mayer Wise was a staunch and loyal

[1] Vol. xli., No. 38.

friend; his motto was, "Once a friend, a friend forever." He never deserted any one whom he had befriended nor who had befriended him, and he refused to believe evil of any one with whom he was closely connected, and this confidence, often misplaced, frequently caused him discomfiture and distress. As already stated, he wrote few letters. Some, however, have been saved. Extracts from these show how true his friendship was. One of his best friends was Mr. A. Anspacher, of San Francisco, with whom he corresponded at intervals:

CINCINNATI, July 28, 1886.

MY DEAR FRIEND ANSPACHER

Permit me, my good friend, to start out with the complaint, that you do me a great wrong, in one of your last letters to this office, in suspecting me of a grudge of any sort of ill feelings toward you. In the first place, I had no cause to harbour such sentiments; and in the second place I never in my life changed my feelings to any person whom I once called a friend or who demonstrated to me by deeds of benevolence his friendship. You might rather put it down as a weak point in my character, that I can never leave a friend even if the world condemns him. A friend once is with me a friend forever, also if he changes and turns against me.

I do not recollect anything from which you might have inferred that I harboured any ill feelings against

you or your family, except my silence. I did not write to you. Allow me to state in extenuation of this suspicion, that I never write unless I have something particular to write. Aside from this, however, there was another cause of silence. The conduct of some persons and congregations in regard to the "Union" and the "College" appeared to me so unprincipled and unjust, so full of egotism and small personal spites, and so bare of loyalty to the cause of Israel and the common interests of our people, which embittered my feelings to that extent, that I felt the necessity of absolute silence, as I was afraid to say too much, especially in writing to a friend, and so for the last two years I wrote no private letters at all. I am somewhat cooled off and toned down now and might write again. Besides I have something to write, viz., I would bespeak your kindest feelings for Rev. Mr. Voorsanger,[1] who is known to me as a gentleman of eminent character and fine qualifications. I wrote to him about you, and I wish to move you to befriend him and to give him your influence.

In my private affairs I am prosperous and satisfied, so I am in my congregation and in Cincinnati in general. The College has built up a reputation which secures its existence as long as there will be Jews in this country, although financially it is much less than prosperous. Last year's deficit was $6000. But there are yet plenty of good men in this country, who are a reliable capital. The institute is now in good working order, and I would retire, in fact I ought to do it in order to write the books which I wish to write;

[1] Rev. Mr. Voorsanger was soon thereafter elected rabbi of Temple Emanuel of San Francisco.

but its finances would not allow it to pay the salary which my successor would have to be paid.

With love to all and special friendship and regard to you, I am always yours,

ISAAC M. WISE.

CINCINNATI, September 23, 1887.

MR. A. ANSPACHER,

DEAR SIR AND FRIEND:

With mine and my family's best wishes for the New Year, I send you a duplicate of my photograph, one for you and one for Mrs. Hannah Meyer, to show you what a Shlemiel I have become in the last ten years, since I saw you last, how careworn and overworked I look, so that you might know and understand why I am not as active and agile as in former years, hence not in the right spirit to write letters of friendship and politeness. Still I must confess that I am entirely well and fit to do the work in which I am engaged.

Friendship in my estimation is no watch which requires frequent winding. A man whom I have once called my friend is my friend forever, my sentiments change not, even if I do not frequently express them. I feel "profounder" than I can utter. Now, please, if angry you were, give it up, and remember kindly

Your old friend,
ISAAC M. WISE.

CINCINNATI, October 9, 1890.

MY DEAR FRIEND ANSPACHER:

Your letter of the 20th inst. touched me to the core, it unfurls the mourning which still bedims your heart;

and I am but sorry that I can not relieve and console you any better than by a mere proof of sympathy, and by pointing to Heaven's love and benignity, to which we all, who trust in Him, must submit with devotion and pious resignation, as did Job in the hour of sore bereavement and painful affliction.

This little poem in memoriam of your good wife . . . has been written long ago. I hoped to hear more particulars about her life, in order to bring it into the poem. But none would write me or publish otherwise the desired information, and so I published what I had written under the personal impression and recollections I had of the noble deceased.

With the assurances of the highest respect and sincere friendship,

Yours,

ISAAC M. WISE.

CINCINNATI, Sept. 23, 1899.

MY DEAR FRIEND ANSPACHER:

It seems that you and I are becoming more foolish as we become older; I because I am now at work sixteen hours a day, meal-time excepted, which is rank folly; and you because you imagine yourself too old to do much of anything. It does not appear from your letter that you are much enfeebled. Still I think we have a right now to get somewhat foolish, I because I was Wise for eighty years, and you because you have done so much good in eighty-two years to the world, that you may now inflict a little folly upon this world. But I must advise you not to afflict yourself with the imagined frailty and feebleness of old age. Keep sweet your humour, as your heart is

benevolent, turn the eighty-two into twenty-eight, and live accordingly with thanks to the Lord who has gifted you with special kindness to be yet A. Anspacher as always heretofore, and expect of Him to prolong the lease up to one hundred, as He can hardly afford to let you go below par. If you want me to do it, I will assist you in negotiating that lease.

Yours as ever,
ISAAC M. WISE.

His friendship with Rev. Dr. Max Lilienthal has already been referred to, as being one of the most notable between rabbis, and the only instance where two eminent rabbis living in the same city were in such intimate relations.

In Cincinnati he was on a very friendly footing with Archbishops Purcell and Elder, as well with the leading Episcopal and other Protestant clergymen. Many of the anecdotes attributed to him regarding Archbishop Purcell are unfounded. However, when the Archbishop at one time issued an order forbidding any Catholic to sing in a choir of a synagogue, Wise spoke against the edict and threatened to retaliate by advising Jews not to employ any Catholics either in their business houses or their homes. This had the desired effect and the obnoxious order was withdrawn.

Special mention should be made of a long and intimate friendship with Thomas F. Vickers,

minister of the Unitarian Church, librarian of the Public Library, and later rector of the University of Cincinnati.

Wise held very liberal and advanced views regarding the Mosaic dietary laws. The following letter contains the best and most succinct expression on this question:

CINCINNATI, O., Nov. 23, 1897.

MR. AMSON MOHR,
Savannah, Ga.
DEAR SIR:

If I open my letter with the excuse that I could find no time to answer yours of the 9th inst. ere this, you might think it is a common phrase to excuse laziness. I can assure you, however, that it is a fact. My duties leave me no time to oblige my best friends, although I am at work every day till midnight.

I have no doubt you and your good wife are perfectly capable and anxiously desirous to educate your sons to be God-fearing, truth-loving, and virtuous Israelite, as becoming the beloved offspring of generous parents, and you will succeed well, for father and mother are the most efficient teachers of their children.

As far as the substance of Judaism is concerned, I believe to have laid it down in the *Judaism: Its Doctrines and Duties*, of which you speak so kindly; what belongs to it, to complete it, is the history of our people, which you certainly have in your library. I said little about dietary and hygienic laws, because aside from the laws of Moses I can not consider them

as appertaining to religion. The Law of Moses prohibits the eating of blood, the flesh of animals which died of any disease or were torn by carnivorous animals, and the animals mentioned in Leviticus xi. and Deuter. xiv. I for my part do not eat anything which Moses prohibits, nor is it used in my house, except oysters, which I think are not included among the forbidden fish kinds. I do this out of respect for the Law of Moses, which I regard as eminently wise and just. Still, as a matter of religion, I can not consider any food regulation binding upon all times and generations, as much depends on climatical conditions and police regulations. So I teach my children to respect every law of Moses—beyond that I do not go—not to violate presumptuously any one at any time; but I do not call it a sin to eat that which civilized people generally eat, although I with this my own conscience would not eat it. There is no reference to food in the Ten Commandments. None can deduce any food arrangement from the Decalogue—and this is the Law of the Covenant—hence eating this or that could not be called a sin according to Moses and the Prophets.

I hope, dear Sir, this my humble opinion will satisfy you, as the best I could say to a friend whom I respect highly and greet fraternally as,

Yours,

ISAAC M. WISE.

The family life of Isaac Mayer Wise was ideal. He was married twice. His first wife was Theresa Bloch, who had been his pupil at Grafenried, and in his *Reminiscences* are many passages showing

how congenial they were, and how noble, self-sacrificing, and helpful she was to her husband. Of this marriage there were born ten children, of whom eight were living at the time of his death in 1900: Emily, his eldest daughter, Mrs. Benjamin May, of Cincinnati; Leo Wise, his eldest son, his father's partner in the publishing firm, Leo Wise & Company, now publisher and editor of the *American Israelite;* Dr. Julius Wise, since deceased, who during the 1878–1879 Memphis yellow fever epidemic was a member of the famous Howard Society. Later he wrote for the *Israelite* under the *nom de plume*, "Nickerdown"; Ida, Mrs. Henry Bernheim, of Cincinnati; Isidor Wise, now connected with the *American Israelite;* Helen, widow of James Molony; Iphigene Miriam, Mrs. Adolph S. Ochs, of New York, and Harry Wise, of Chattanooga, Tennessee.

About 1870 Dr. Wise's wife became an invalid, and during the remaining four years of her life was a great sufferer. He was most solicitous during her long illness and bore with great fortitude and stoicism her untimely death in December, 1874, at the age of fifty-three years.

On April 25, 1876, he married Miss Selma Bondi, of New York City, the daughter of the distinguished and learned Rabbi Jonah Bondi. Selma

Bondi Wise, who survives her husband, was a splendid helpmate, a woman of fine education, of artistic tastes, well read and widely informed. During the twenty-four years of their married life she was his companion on all his trips, and looked after all his needs. Of this marriage there were born four children, the eldest, Elsie Corinne Wise, a beautiful and lovely young girl, died in her twenty-second year, less than a year before her father, who bore this great sorrow with great resignation; Jonah Bondi Wise, now rabbi of Temple Beth Israel, of Portland, Oregon, and his twin sister, Regina, Mrs. Albert J. May, of Cincinnati, and Isaac M. Wise, a member of the Cincinnati, Hamilton County Bar. At the time of Dr. Wise's death there were fourteen grandchildren living.

In December, 1861, Dr. Wise purchased a large farm on the Hamilton turnpike about two miles north of the village of College Hill, and about a mile south of Mount Healthy, then known as Mount Pleasant. He selected this beautiful place because it was near College Hill where there were then located two well-known educational institutions, the Ohio Female College, which his older daughters attended, and Farmer's College, where his older sons were enrolled.

For many years he lived on the farm throughout the entire year and became a gentleman farmer. He often joked about the cost of his potatoes, melons, and wine. He took a keen delight in this farm, which at the time of his death contained about forty-two acres. At the time of this purchase the only public conveyances to the farm were two omnibus lines, one to College Hill and the other to Mount Healthy. Wise kept several horses and conveyances, and had many cattle. Undoubtedly his excellent health and his vigorous old age were in a large measure due to the life on the farm, and his daily drives to and from the city, a distance of nine miles. Wise and his horse, jogging along, while the doctor sat smoking and in deep thought, were familiar figures on the old pike.

The Wise farm was well known in the city, and during the first ten years he lived there his friends would visit him in large numbers every Sunday, and during the summer scarcely a Sunday passed without twenty to thirty sitting down to meals. He was known for his generous hospitality and seldom was without guests. He spent his last summer, that of 1899, on the farm, where he sat for the famous sculptor, Sir Moses Ezekiel, of Rome, a former Cincinnatian, who had been commissioned by the Plum Street Congregation to

make a life-sized bronze bust of Wise in commemoration of his eightieth birthday, that had occurred in the previous March. After his death this bust was presented by his family to the Hebrew Union College. Shortly after his death the Wise farm, or Floral House as it was known, passed into the hands of his daughter, Mrs. Adolph S. Ochs, of New York, who keeps the old homestead as a memorial to her father.

Wise was an indefatigable worker, and during his early career in America he worked eighteen hours a day, and in his latter years ten to twelve hours. He would rise between seven and eight. In his early years in Cincinnati he would do most of his writing at the office of the *Israelite*, but in later years he worked more in the library of his home. On the farm he had a large room, the walls of which were lined with bookcases, and a large table at which he worked. He never missed furnishing copy for his papers. He usually came to the *Israelite* office on Monday and Tuesday, when he read his proofs. Here he met visitors, and in the afternoon he would attend college, where he remained until it was time to go to the farm, or if he was living in the city, to his home. During the last ten years of his life he would take a short nap after lunch, and in the evening on the farm

he would sit on the veranda about an hour after supper, smoking his cigar. He was an inveterate smoker, and would puff away at his cigar, often unconscious of the fact that it had gone out. After resting he would go into his library and work until midnight. Then he would take off his glasses, lay them on the table, and retire. He used glasses only when he read and wrote, and when they were not in use he invariably wore them on the top of his head, and frequently would forget he had placed them there; his bright eyes were undimmed until the end. In height he was five feet, eight, and had a magnificent head, and his chief characteristic was his genial smile, which lighted up his countenance.

During the last thirty years of his life he was somewhat stooped and dragged in his step. This was undoubtedly due to the sedentary habit and position he assumed while writing.

He was simple in dress and usually wore black clothes, a white shirt, a wing collar, with a white neckcloth; in winter an old-fashioned high hat, in summer a broad-brimmed straw, and always carried a cane. In walking with a companion, if he desired to call especial attention to anything, his custom was to stop short, and soon after he would continue his walk, only to stop again.

When working in his library he would wear a long smoking-gown and in summer he would work in his shirt-sleeves. On his seventieth birthday, as has already been stated, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations presented him with a house near the college. Here he lived from October to May, when he would return to the farm. The alumni of the college furnished his library, where he loved to work. His desk here, as well as the large table on the farm, was always covered with books, papers, magazines, and pamphlets. The following letter describes his removal to his new home:

CINCINNATI, Oct. 30, 1889.

MY DEAR SON MAX:[1]

I am moved, not so much by your last letter, as by the big wagons you know as a special Cincinnati institution.

I am settled down again to work and see that is also the case with you, only that you have more courses in school than I have at dinner. But I guess that is all right if you can stand it.

Mrs. Wise and the children, in fact the whole family, are in best condition of health and cheer. I wish you were here just to see how orderly it looks in my library, no books on the table, no periodicals obscure the view, nothing to mar the beauty of the new study simply

[1] Addressed to Max B. May, his eldest grandson, who was at Harvard Law School, and whom he always addressed as "son."

because I have done nothing during the past four weeks.

I ought of right send you some paternal advice, prescribe to you some sagacious rules of conduct, a dose of moral precepts, some religious sparks, and so on, becoming a hoary and priestly grandfather. Still I think you can get along quite well without it, and I dislike to play the moralist and sage outside the pulpit. . . .

Guests are coming, and a good many of them. I must stop abruptly. Hope to hear of you soon.

ISAAC M. WISE.

He was a familiar figure on Sixth Street between Cutter and Mound, where he could be seen daily with a group of students and professors accompanying him to and from the college after the manner that the disciples followed Socrates.

For the household he was a most liberal provider and always attended to the marketing. The butcher and the baker would drive into his farmyard, and he would select the meat, and near his city home there was a suitable meat store at which he would do the marketing. His table, though abundantly supplied, was simple; his appetite was good.

After his illness in Albany in 1850, and a short illness in 1856 in Cincinnati, he was seldom indisposed during his long life. He could endure travelling without fatigue. In his eightieth year he

describes a trip he took in September, 1898. Writing in the *Israelite* of September 15th,[1] of that year, under the head, "Three Days on Duty, Three Nights on the Train," he says: "We left Cincinnati Thursday, 8:00 P. M. . . for Peoria. . . . The next morning we were in Peoria. The first thing we did that morning was to pray at the grave of our dearly beloved mother. . . . We will not impose on our readers our feelings and recollections, they are too sacred to be described. Mother Regina was a queen in name and in truth." At Peoria he dedicated the new temple Anshe Emeth and installed as rabbi his former assistant, Charles S. Levi. On Saturday evening he left for Chicago, where he arrived early Sunday morning. "The first thing we did," he writes, "was to take a ride to meet a supposed benefactor (of the Hebrew Union College) who did not benefit us." Later in the day he laid the corner-stone of Rabbi Joseph Stolz's new temple Isaiah, and met many old acquaintances, and that night travelled to Cincinnati. He then says that he wrote his report of the trip upon his arrival at Cincinnati, and "at 2:00 P.M. we were in the Hebrew Union College on duty at the opening of the preparatory department for the year 1898–1899, and closed

[1] Vol. xlv., No. 11.

the day with the marriage of Mr. S. K. and Miss A. S., and then we went home to rest a while."

Wise believed in being prepared for all emergencies. If he proposed or suggested any plans for any special purpose, he had always carefully worked out the main points. He would never put off for the morrow what could be done today, and was ever ready to defend the Jews and Judaism. A few extracts from his editorials give an accurate insight into his method. Speaking of the publication of the Minhag America (American Ritual) and its adoption by many congregations in the West and South-west, he writes in the *Israelite* of February 27, 1884: "The uniting effect of this move was counteracted in the East by the publication of four other (prayer) books, and a number of temporary forms of worship. I sat down and wrote the *Essence of Judaism*, which was afterwards remodelled into *Judaism: Its Doctrines and Duties*, as a brief text-book for the rising generation, and saw it spreading far and wide over the whole country. Instantly a half a dozen of so-called catechisms were written and set afloat to counteract this move on behalf of union.

"Whenever the Jew and Judaism were attacked, I was there, writing or speaking in defence of it. Whenever Judaism needed an expounder or advo-

cate, I was there, called or not called, paid or not paid, whenever and wherever I was wanted. The opponents could not imitate this, but did their best in a private way, and in a press kept up for the purpose to decry and defame me in every possible way just as they do now in Philadelphia and New York. When from all sides Christian teachers, writers, and orators attacked Judaism and accused the Jews of ignorance of the New Testament, I was the man to accept the challenge. I sat down and wrote my books and lectures on Christianity, and travelled with them all over the land to avert the attacks and give to the Jews a firm standpoint opposite Christianity and its founder, which you can hear now re-echoed by almost all Jewish speakers."

A critical estimate of Isaac Mayer Wise as an author is not within the scope of this book. In an appendix appears a complete bibliography of his work prepared by Mr. A. S. Oko, librarian of the Hebrew Union College.

Wise was greatly interested in the schools of Cincinnati, and during the years 1875–1884 he was a member of the Board of Examiners who passed upon the qualifications of all teachers for the public schools. After Dr. Lilienthal's death, in 1882, Wise was appointed his successor on the

Board of Directors of the University of Cincinnati and served until 1898, when he resigned. While on that board he was a member of the Academic Committee, which had charge of the curriculum of the university.

CHAPTER XVI

THE END

ISAAC MAYER WISE was active to the last. On Saturday morning, March 24, 1900, he occupied his pulpit at the Plum Street Temple, and preached an impressive sermon, taking as his text Numbers vi., 24: "May the Lord bless thee and keep thee; May the Lord let His countenance shine upon thee and be gracious to thee; May the Lord lift up His countenance to thee and grant thee peace." After the services, as was the custom, a large number of the congregation grasped his hand and exchanged the Sabbath greeting, "Good Sabbath," unconscious of the fact that the eloquent voice that had just given the priestly benediction had been heard by them for the last time, and that Bene Yeshurun congregation, the mother of American Judaism, was soon to mourn the loss of her great rabbi and leader, who during the past forty-six years had sent forth from her pulpit the inspiring truths of Israel's religion.

Saturday noon Dr. Wise dined with his family and was in good spirits. After a short rest he went to the Hebrew Union College to meet his class at two o'clock. He taught as usual, and, after the hour, just as he was rising from his chair the fatal stroke came and he fell. His faithful students removed him to a couch in the president's office, whence he was taken to his home in a semi-conscious condition. During that night he tried to speak, but his words were inaudible; he tried to write, but the hand that had wielded the pen during all these years was helpless now. On Sunday, he became unconscious, and on Monday, March 26, 1900, just as the sun was setting, his great spirit returned to God and Isaac Mayer Wise slept with his fathers.

On Thursday, March 29, 1900, the eighty-first anniversary of his birth, he was buried from the Plum Street Temple. His body lay in state in the temple that he had made famous throughout the land. Thousands of his fellow-citizens passed around his coffin, which, in accordance with his wish, was a plain pine box without any ornaments, lined with white muslin. A black pall was thrown over the rude coffin, and upon it one token, of smilax and violets.

When the services began every seat in the large

temple was occupied, and, despite the raw and rainy day, hundreds were standing in the streets outside. The services consisted of an opening prayer by Rev. Dr. David Philipson, Rabbi of Bene Israel congregation; this was followed by a hymn written by Dr. Wise, "Es Leben Unsere Toden" (Our Dead Shall Live). The funeral oration was delivered by Rev. Dr. Louis Grossmann, Wise's associate as rabbi of Plum Street Temple. He took as his text Psalm xxv., verses 12–13: "Who is this man? He feared God and pointed out the chosen way. His soul dwelleth in good and his seed will inherit the earth," which Dr. Wise had chosen thirty years before as his own funeral text.

The funeral address was an eloquent and fitting tribute to the great leader in Israel. The active pall-bearers were the eleven students of the senior class of the college. The funeral was one of the largest ever seen in Cincinnati. The interment was in the United Jewish Cemetery on Walnut Hills, and a year later Congregation Bene Yeshurun erected a tall, simple marble shaft with the inscription, "Isaac M. Wise," and set a headstone bearing the following inscription:

"ISAAC M. WISE

Born in Steingrub, Bohemia, March 29, 1819

Died March 26, 1900

Rabbi of K. K. Bene Yeshurun

Founder of

The Union of American Hebrew Congregations

The Hebrew Union College

The Central Conference of American Rabbis."

In 1846 when Wise arrived in America, he found the Jews of this country unorganized and many of them were drifting away from Judaism. Their religious life was a reproduction of the intolerable conditions that existed in the old Ghetto. He realized that if Judaism in America was to be preserved it would be necessary not only to Americanize the Jew, but his Judaism. This he accomplished by the several organizations that he founded and the papers he published, and at his death, through his efforts, the American Jew was an influential, respected, public-spirited, and philanthropic citizen of every community in which he lived, and his religion modernized and adapted to his new environment.

What Martin Luther was to the Reformation, Samuel Adams to the American Revolution, and William Lloyd Garrison to Abolitionism, Isaac Mayer Wise was to Reform Judaism in America. He was the very head and front of the movement and bore the whole brunt of the struggle. His life's work is well summed up in his salutatory to vol. xliv. of the *American Israelite*, published July 1, 1897:

"It [*Israelite*] started out with the well-defined purpose to Americanize the foreign-born Judaism and the Jews, to make them permanently at home in this land of freedom and human ideals, in full sympathy with its people, its laws, and institutions, its language, literature, and customs, its ideas and ideals. The Jew must become a genuine American citizen in fact and feeling, and Judaism an American religion in essence and forms—was the inscription on our banner. . . .

"None who observed the course and career of this journal will deny that this was its guiding star. None who knows the status of the Jew and Judaism will gainsay the fact that it was accomplished. There are today no better American citizens than the Jews, and no religion better befitting a free people than Judaism. None will maintain that the *Israelite* alone has done it; time with its irresistible

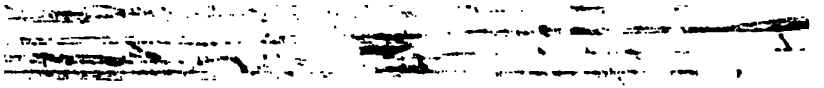
influences, the stern common sense of our people, the enthusiasm of many leading men have co-operated to achieve this result. But the *Israelite* worked with all of them consistently and persistently, with premeditation and solid conviction that this is the only salvation for the Jew and Judaism. . . .

"Reform Judaism is not the work of the *Israelite*. American Judaism is. We had a goodly number of reformers, rabbis, and laymen, working industriously and successfully tearing down and building up after the German fashion and pattern. It looked like transplanting Germany into America. This was not what was wanted. We could raise no objection to the reform imported from Germany. Faithful to its principles, the *Israelite* brought forth the Minhag America (American Ritual) and this took well among the masses. It at once led numerous congregations from the old and antiquated rituals to homelike, sensible, and reasonable forms of worship. The *Israelite* is responsible for the Minhag America, the transition from the old to the new form of synagogal worship.

"The same is the case with American Judaism and all the purely American institutions belonging thereto, the *Israelite* is responsible for all of them.

. . . It (*Israelite*) is the mother of American Judaism."

The life and career of Isaac Mayer Wise, the founder of American Judaism, entitle him to the fame of being the greatest American Jew of the nineteenth century, and the peer of any Jew of that illustrious age.



A LIST OF THE WRITINGS

OF

ISAAC MAYER WISE

PREPARED BY

ADOLPH S. OKO

LIBRARIAN, HEBREW UNION COLLEGE

NOTE.

The following is but a tentative (by no means selective) list of the writings of Isaac M. Wise. With a single exception (No. 39), and unless re-issued separately, no attempt was here made to survey his numerous, signed and unsigned, articles, essays, sermons, novels and stories that appeared, during a period of fifty-three years, in the *Israelite* (afterwards, *American Israelite*), or to record the important dissertations and translations he contributed to the *Asmonean* and the *Deborah*. Neither are his addresses published in the *Proceedings* of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations included; while only about one half of his contributions to the *Occident* are listed here.

However, the year 1919, the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Dr. Wise, will be a timely and appropriate occasion also to give a complete and systematic bibliography of the works that have issued from his pen for over five decades.

The list is divided into two sections (I. Separate Works; II. Articles and Contributions), consecutively numbered, and the titles in each section are in chronological sequence. Reprinted articles, etc., are listed in Section I. "Editions" of any given

independent work follow the original issue. The occasional annotations may not prove altogether superfluous. The abbreviations employed are self-explanatory.

A. S. O.

I. SEPARATE WORKS

1. The End of Popes, Nobles, and Kings; or, The Progress of Civilization [a lecture], delivered before the Hebrew Young Men's Literary Association of the City of New York (December 22, 1852). *New York: J. Muhlhaeuser*, 1852. 20 p. 12°.
2. History of the Israelitish Nation, from Abraham to the Present Time. Derived from the original sources. v. 1. *Albany: J. Munsell*, 1854. xxiv., 560 p. 8°.
3. [Minhag America.] A form of worship for American Israelites in Hebrew. Also issued together with the following English and German versions. *Cincinnati: Bloch & Co.*, 1857. 1 p. l., ii. p., 1 l., 5–144 p. 16°.
4. [Minhag America.] The daily prayers, part 1. Revised and compiled by the committee of the Cleveland conference. Translated by Isaac M. Wise. *Cincinnati: Bloch & Co.*, 5617 [=1857]. iv., 5–120 p. 16°.
5. Gebet-Buch für den oeffentlichen Gottesdienst und die Privat-Andacht. Theil 1. Geordnet und übersetzt von der in der Cleveländer Conferenz ernannten liturgischen Commission, den Rabbinern Kalisch, Rothenheim und Wise. *Cincinnati: Bloch u. Co.*, 1857. iv., 5–171 p. 16°.

Also issued together with the Hebrew version. For criticism, see: *Sinai*, Jahrg. 2 (1857–58), p. 788–792; Jahrg. 3 (1858–59), p. 837–841, 867–871, 978–981, 995–997.

5a. [Minhag America.] Gebet-Buch für den oeffentlichen Gottesdienst und die Privat-Andacht. Zweite verbesserte deutsche Ausgabe. *Cincinnati: Bloch u. Co.*, 1864 [cop. 1861]. 4 p. l., (1) p., 6–139 f., 140–144 p. 16°.

Hebrew and German, printed side by side. The Hebrew text was printed from the plates of the 1857 edition.

5b. [Minhag America.] Daily prayers. Seventh revised stereotype edition. *Cincinnati, O.: Bloch & Co.*, 1870. v.p. [160 p.] 16°.

Hebrew only.

5c. [Minhag America.] The daily prayers, for American Israelites as revised in conference. [Appended: Select prayers (in English) for various occasions in life. . . .] *Cincinnati: Bloch & Co.* [cop. 1872]. 3 p.l., (1) 6–271, 48 p. 16°.

Hebrew and English.

5d. ———— *Cincinnati: The Bloch Publishing and Printing Co.*, 1889 [cop. 1872]. 3 p.l., (1) 6–271, 48 p. 16°.

Hebrew and English.—Frequently reprinted.

5e. [Minhag America.] The daily prayers, for American Israelites (school edition). *Cincinnati: The Bloch Publishing and Printing Co.*, [cop. 1872]. v.p. [138 p.]. 16°.

Hebrew only.

5f. [Minhag America.] The daily prayers for American Israelites, as revised in conference. *Cincinnati: The Bloch Publishing and Printing Co.*, 1887 [cop. 1872]. v.p. [138 p.]. 16°.

Hebrew only.—Differs from the preceding in slight typographical alterations only.

5g. Gebete der Israeliten in Amerika. (Verbessert von der Conferenz.) [Appended: Gebete zur oeffentlichen und häuslichen Andacht. Sammlung von Gebeten (in German) für alle Verhältnisse des Lebens, für Frauen und Mädchen.] *Cincinnati, O.: Bloch & Co.* [cop. 1873]. 3 pl., (1) 6–271, 65 p. 16°.

Hebrew and German.—For the *Minhag America* for holidays, see No. 10–11; see also No. 12–12a.

6. Der maskierte Liebhaber; oder, Die Schule der Besserung. Ein Lustspiel mit Gesang in vier Abtheilungen. *Cincinnati: Bloch & Co.*, 1858. 48 p. 8°.

7. The Combat of the People; or, Hillel and Herod. A historical romance of the time of Herod I. *Cincinnati, O.: Bloch & Co.*, 1859. 151 p. 8°

Originally published in *Israelite.*

8. The First of the Maccabees. *Cincinnati, O.: Bloch & Co.*, 1860. 180 p. 8°.

Originally published in *Israelite.*—Treats of "the period from the arousal of the Jewish people by the Asmonean and his sons to the re-dedication of the temple at Jerusalem."

8a. The First of the Maccabees. A historical novel. *Cincinnati: The Bloch Publishing and Printing Co.*, n. d. 180 p. 8°.

Same edition as preceding, with a new top.

8b. Les Asmonéens. Drame en cinq actes, en prose, tiré du roman The First of the Maccabees de Isaac M. Wise par M. le docteur Bliden; avec l'autorisation de l'auteur. Traduction par I. Epstein. *Jérusalem (printed): École de filles de Safed*, 1893. 111 p. 16°.

9. The Essence of Judaism: for teachers and pupils, and for self-instruction. *Cincinnati, O.: Bloch & Co.*, 1861. 65 p. 16°.

"With the publication of this book the popularization of Biblical Judaism began." (From a MS. note by the author on a fly-leaf of the copy in the Hebrew Union College Library.)

9a. The Essence of Judaism: for teachers and pupils, and for self-instruction. Second edition. *Cincinnati, O.: Bloch & Co.*, 1868. 80 p. 16°.

See also No. 15.

10. The Divine Service of American Israelites for the New Year. By Isaac M. Wise. *Cincinnati: Bloch & Co.* [cop. 1866]. 212 p. 16°.

Hebrew and English.—This and the following work form part 2 of the *Minhag America*, and were "in use throughout the country until the appearance [in 1894] of the second volume of the Union Prayer Book" (*Selected Writings*, p. 98).

11. The Divine Service of American Israelites for the Day of Atonement. By Isaac M. Wise. [Appended: A selection of Psalms (in Hebrew).] *Cincinnati: Bloch & Co.*, 1866. 307, 55 p. 16°.
12. Hymns, Psalms, and Prayers, in English and German. By Isaac M. Wise, and others. *Cincinnati: Bloch & Co.* [cop. 1868]. 263 p. 16°.

"With the present volume, the author concludes his labour for the *Minhag America*. . . . All original pieces in this volume written by others than the author are marked with their respective names. Pieces adopted from other collections are also properly noted. All other pieces are claimed by the author as his own productions." (*Introduction.*)

12a. Hymns and Prayers, in English and German. By Isaac M. Wise, and others. *Cincinnati and Chicago: The Bloch Publishing and Printing Co.*, 1890. ix, 10–263 p. 16°.

Differs from the preceding in slight typographical alterations only.

13. The Origin of Christianity, and a Commentary to the Acts of the Apostles. *Cincinnati: Bloch & Co.*, 1868. vii. (i.), (1) 10–535 p. 12°.
14. A lecture [:—"Our Country's Place in History"]. Delivered January 7, 1869, before the Theological and Religious Library Association of Cincinnati. n.t.-p. [*Cincinnati, O.*, 1869.] 7 p. 8°.

Title taken from first page.

15. Judaism: Its Doctrines and Duties. [*Cincinnati:*] *Office of the Israelite* [cop. 1872]. 83 p. 12°.

Being the "Essence of Judaism" (1861) re-written "in the popular and catechetic form," to which is "added the main Scriptural passage to each paragraph."

16. Three lectures on the Origin of Christianity. *Cincinnati, O.: Bloch & Co.* [1873]. 33 p. 8°.

First lecture: Jesus the Pharisee. Second lecture: The Apostles and the Essenes. Third lecture: Paul and the Mystics. —Lecture 3, reprinted in: *Selected Writings* (1900), p. 352–375.

17. The Martyrdom of Jesus of Nazareth. A historic-critical treatise of the last chapters of the Gospel. *Cincinnati, O.: Office of the American Israelite* [cop. 1874]. 134 p. 8°.
18. The Cosmic God. A fundamental philosophy in popular lectures. *Cincinnati: Office American Israelite and Deborah*, 1876. 181 p., 1 port. 8°.
19. The Wandering Jew. A lecture. n.t.-p. [*Cincinnati*, 1877.] 12 p. 8°.

Title taken from first page.—Originally published in *American Israelite*, v. 29 [n.s., v.7], No. 15.—Reprinted in: *Selected Writings* (1900), p. 179–196.—Treats on the part the Jew has played in the world's civilization.

20. History of the Hebrews' Second Commonwealth, with special reference to its literature, culture, and the origin of rabbinism and Christianity. *Cincinnati: Bloch & Co.*, 1880. 3 p.l., 386 p. 8°.

Deals with the period from Zerubbabel to the fall of Jerusalem: 536 B.C.E. to 70 C.E.—The book is "divided into Periods and Chapters and subdivided into Paragraphs, in a manner which decidedly assists the memory. . . . The present volume, though a complete book in itself, is a continuation of the ["History of the Israelitish Nation," 1854]. It begins where the first [publication] closes" (*Preface*).—See No. 2.

21. Judaism and Christianity, their Agreements and Disagreements. A series of Friday evening lectures, delivered at the Plum Street Temple, Cincinnati, Ohio. *Cincinnati: Bloch & Co.*, 1883. 123 (1) p., 1 l. 8°.
22. Moses, the Man and Statesman. A lecture . . . *Cincinnati: Bloch & Co.*, [1883]. 28 p. 8°.

Reprinted in: *Selected Writings* (1900), p. 153–178.

23. An essay on the temperance question. [*Cincinnati*, 188–?] 8 p. 8°.

Read before the Friends of Inquiry in Cincinnati.

24. A Defence of Judaism versus Proselytizing Christianity. *Cincinnati: American Israelite*, 1889. 129 p. 8°.
25. Pronaos to Holy Writ establishing, on documentary evidence, the authorship, date, form, and contents of each of its books and the authenticity of the Pentateuch. *Cincinnati: R. Clarke & Co.*, 1891. 193 p. 8°.

Review of: Abrahams, Israel. The "Pronaos" of Wise (*Jewish World* [London]. 1914. May 6, p. 24–25).

26. The History of the K. K. Bene Yeshurun, of Cincinnati, Ohio, from the date of its organization. Published in commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of its incorporation, by a committee of the board of trustees, Cincinnati, February 28, 1892. [By Isaac Mayer Wise and Max B. May.] [*Cincinnati:*] *Bloch Printing Co.* [1892]. 47 l., 4 pl., 1 port. Sq. 8°.
27. An Introduction to the Theology of Judaism, delivered at the World's Congress of Religions. n.t.-p. [*Cincinnati*, 1894.] 22 p. 8°.

Title taken from first page.—Reprinted from: *Judaism at the World's Parliament on Religions*. Cincinnati, 1894.

28. New edition of the Babylonian Talmud. English translation. Original text edited, formulated, and punctuated by Michael L. Rodkinson. Revised and corrected by the Rev. Dr. Isaac M. Wise. v. 1–2: Tractat Sabbath. *New York: New Amsterdam Book Co.* [cop. 1896]. f°.

29. Selected Writings. With a biography by the editors, David Philipson and Louis Grossmann. Published under the auspices of the Alumnal Association of the Hebrew Union College. *Cincinnati: R. Clarke Co.*, 1900. vi., 419 p., 2 pl., 3 port. 8°.

30. Reminiscences. Translated from the German and edited with an introduction by David Philipson. *Cincinnati: L. Wise & Co.*, 1901. 367 p., 1 pl., 3 port. 8°.

II. ARTICLES AND CONTRIBUTIONS.

31. The Light. A sermon, delivered at the synagogue Shaar Hashamayim, in New York, March 3, 5609. (*Occident. Philadelphia* [1849–50]. 8°. v. 7, p. 12–25.)

32. Future Reward and Punishment. (*Same.* p. 86–89.)

33. The Messiah. (*Same.* p. 181–192, 229–244.)

Pt. I.: Introduction, [and:] The Mission of the People of Israel. A sermon, delivered at Albany, Jan. 30, 5609.—Pt. II.: Development and Opposition. A sermon, delivered at Albany, Feb. 12, 5609.—". . . the intolerant and fanatical lectures of a minister of the Baptist Church in this city gave rise to this course of lectures. They were delivered before a numerous audience of Jews and Christians."

34. The Genealogy of Joseph, after Matthew. (*Same.* p. 375–376.)

35. Moreh Nebuchim Liber ductor perplexorum. (*Same.* v. 8 [1850–51], p. 31–34.)

A description of the contents of the work by Maimonides.

36. The Effect of Biblical Theology. A sermon delivered at Charleston. (*Same.* p. 217–231.)

37. Letters [3] on Christianity, to the Rev. M. R. Miller. (*Same.* p. 232–237, 509–514, 594–599.)

38. Principles of Judaism. No. I.–V. (*Same.* p. 492–496, 541–544; v. 9 [1851–52], p. 14–19, 187–195, 298–305.)

In form of letters to the editor.

39. A chapter in continuation of my "History of the Israelitish Nation." Chapter XIII. (588 to 536 B.C.) (*Israelite*

[afterwards, *American Israelite*]. *Cincinnati*, 1855–56. f°. v. 2, p. 225–226.) *See* No. 2.

40. Erklärung. [Aufruf an die Rabbinen, Redacteure und Herausgeber jüdischer Zeitschriften in Europa im Namen der Humanität und speciell im Namen eines betrogenen Weibes, Harriet Silbermann aus Chicago.] (*Jüdische Zeitschrift für Wissenschaft und Leben. Breslau*, 1862. 8°. Jahrg. 1, p. 163–164.)
41. The Law. (*Hebrew Review. Cincinnati* [1880]. 8°. v. 1, p. 12–31.)

Discussion of the essay, the argument of which was orally delivered by the author at the conference of the Rabbinical Literary Association July 14, 1880, on p. 74–79.—Reprinted in: *Selected Writings* (1900), p. 125–152.

42. Rosh Hashanah. [Sermon.] (In: *American Jewish Pulpit. Cincinnati*, 1881. 8°. p. 127–137.)
43. Men More Instructive than Words. (Sketch of a Hanukah sermon.) (*Same.* p. 185–189.)
44. Hebrew Monotheism. A dedication sermon. (*Same.* p. 199–208.)
45. The Main Lesson of Israel's Sanctuary. [Sermon.] (*Same.* p. 209–218.)
46. The Fourth of July. [Sermon.] (*Same.* p. 219–226.)
47. The Word of God. A Sabbath nahamoo sermon. (*Same.* p. 227–234.)
48. The Massorah and the Massoretic Text. (*Hebrew Review. Cincinnati*, 1881–82. 8°. v. 2, p. 107–117.)

Reads: "To be continued"; no more appeared.

49. Reminiscences [of Max Lilienthal]. (*Same.* p. 184–190.)

Anonymously.

50. A Sketch of Judaism in America. (*American Jews' Annual. Cincinnati*, 1884. 8°. p. 37–55.)
51. American Judaism. A record of American Judaism from the year 5645 A.M. (*Same.* 1885, 4 l.)
52. Adolph Huebsch, Biographie. (In: *Huebsch, Adolph —A memorial. New York*, 1885. 8°. p. i.–xiii.)

53. A Record of American Judaism for A.M. 5646. (*American Jews' Annual. Cincinnati*, 1886. 8°. p. 52–68.)
54. American Judaism. Its record from New Year 5646 A.M. to December, 1887. (*Same.* 1888, p. 35–47.)
55. Presidential Addresses delivered at the Central Conference of American Rabbis. Year Books C. C. A. R., 1891–1899. (v. 1, pp. 11–21; v. 2, pp. 6–11; v. 3, pp. 1–10; v. 4, pp. 24–29; pp. 67–76; v. 5, pp. 6–11; v. 6, pp. 11–19; v. 7, pp. vi.–xiii.; v. 8, pp. 8–16; v. 9, pp. 28–31.)

Several items condensed by author of book.

56. The Ethics of Judaism. (In: *Judaism at the World's Parliament of Religions. Cincinnati*, 1894. 8°. p. 99–106.)
57. Introduction to a bibliography of the Jewish periodical press. (*Same.* p. 402–409.)

See also note of No. 27.

58. Introduction. [I. Reading of Scriptures. II. Expounding Scriptures. III. The Maggid and Darshon. IV. The Retrogression. V. The Sermon in America.] (In: *Central Conference of American Rabbis.—Sermons by American Rabbis. Chicago*, 1896. 8°. p. vii.–xiv.)
59. Freedom, Justice, and Fidelity. A Passover sermon. (*Same.* p. 180–188.)
60. Genius in History and the History of Genius. A lecture delivered in St. Louis. (*Same.* p. 200–216.)
61. Zionism. ([*Hebrew*] [*Union*] [*College*] *Journal. Cincinnati*, 1899–1900. 8°. v. 4, p. 45–47.)
62. A Jewish State Impossible. An article in the New York *Times* on Zionism. Sept. 8, 1897.

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